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ITS ORIGIN AND PROGRESS

Volume I

THE RISE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION
ITS ORIGIN AND PROGRESS

General Editor:
J. F. BETHUNE-BAKER, D.D., F.B.A.
Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity
in the University of Cambridge

I
THE RISE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Part I
THE JEWISH PEOPLE AND THEIR FAITH

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THE JEWISH PEOPLE AND THEIR FAITH

by

L. ELLIOTT BINNS, D.D.

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GENERAL PREFACE

THE idea of this series of books originated with the Rev. P. Gardner-Smith, Fellow and Dean of Jesus College, Cambridge, who thought that many teachers of boys and girls would welcome a series of little books which severally might provide a term's work for their pupils, and taken all together, in sequence, supply them with the kind of knowledge of the Christian Religion and the Christian Church in the past that would explain to them the state of things by which they are confronted today.

We enlisted the help of Professor J. M. Creed and the Rev. J. W. Hunkin (now Archdeacon of Coventry), and the four of us together drafted the scheme and the syllabus of the different parts of it as a guide to the various writers, and have read each part. Each writer's treatment of the subject, of course, is his own, and some have not kept to the original scheme quite as closely as others have. But if we cannot hope that each part of the series will be found the most suitable book on its subject for use in Schools, we are confident that any one who reads through the three volumes will have acquired a true perspective of the whole subject and be able to form a sound judgement of the right and the wrong of many questions in dispute today. We hope, indeed, that what we have provided may be found of

interest and value to many who have left their school years far behind them.

Even among those who profess and call themselves Christians and are members of Christian Churches there is widespread uncertainty and doubt as to much that has been believed in the past and been reckoned a necessary part of the faith of a Christian, and again as to the possibility of carrying on life in the world as it is without being false to the ideals of Jesus at every turn. Yet the appeal that those ideals make comes as strongly as ever to men and women of all kinds everywhere today, and more of them than ever before are convinced that the solution of our present problems—individual and social, economic and international—is only to be found on lines that run parallel at least with the idealism of Jesus—love of GOD and love of Man.

Is Christianity a failure? Is it a case of "the high that proved too high?" and though it has claimed men's allegiance for nineteen hundred years, can it do so still? Is it still capable of being a guide to the right attitude to the world in which we find ourselves, the right way of thinking and feeling and living?

Everyone early in life ought to face these questions. But they cannot be answered by anyone who does not know what Christianity has been, how it came into being, what it had to contend with, and what it has achieved in the past.

This series of books is intended to supply sufficient knowledge of these things to suggest a reasonable answer.

The first volume gives a picture of the new society of Christians already in being, with its beliefs and its way of life, twenty or thirty years after it came into existence:— as soon, that is, as we have detailed evidence about it. To that is prefixed an account of the religious history of the Hebrew people among whom the new religion had its origin; and it is followed by a survey of the traditions about the personality and life and teaching of its Founder which were current in the society He brought into being in the early years of its existence, and since at least the middle of the second century have been regarded as inspired accounts of the actual facts.

The second volume will shew how the new religion made its way in the old world and overcame its rivals; and then will trace its history in the West and particularly in England, giving attention especially to such institutions and movements as have proved to be of lasting influence.

In the third volume the attempt is made to set out in its main features the faith of the Church in comparison with some of its rivals of today; to sketch the history of its worship with special reference to the English Book of Common Prayer; and finally to answer the question What is the Church's task in the world today?

The writers of these books are not among those who

think that *apologia* for Christianity is needed. Its chequered history shews great ideas and ideals fighting their way to a victory that has never yet been won, except for moments and by individuals. Always new conditions and new knowledge are setting would-be Christians new problems to solve. Christianity survives in the world because it has always been able to adapt itself to different conditions of knowledge and thought and life, assimilating much that was new and transfiguring it in turn. It is still a fighting Faith and a fighting Church, making converts all over the world, with which we have to deal. But it is to a quiet survey of its origins, its characteristics, and its history that readers of these volumes are invited.

J. F. BETHUNE-BAKER

Cambridge
23 *August* 1929

THE JEWISH PEOPLE AND THEIR FAITH

By

L. ELLIOTT BINNS

CHAPTER ONE

THE SOURCES OF OUR KNOWLEDGE

FREDERIC THE GREAT of Prussia, who was somewhat loose in his religious opinions, is reported on one occasion to have asked his chaplain to give him, in as few words as possible, some clear evidence of the truth of Christianity. 'The Jews, your majesty', tersely replied the chaplain. Whether it be accepted as evidence for the truth of Christianity or not, the survival of the Jewish people is one of the most striking phenomena in history. They lost their national freedom on the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., but in spite of this they have remained a distinct race, although for nearly two thousand years without a land of their own. The early history of such a people must in itself be worthy of study. But if we wish to acquaint ourselves with the background of the life of Him who was, after the flesh, the greatest product of the Jewish people, and desire to understand the growth of the Church which He founded, such a study is essential. The Christian Church is rooted in Judaism, and the New Testament is the sequel, although on a higher plane, of the Old.

The story of the early years of Israel is lost amidst legend and folk-lore. Certain important events, however, like the Exodus, and certain great personalities, like Moses, stand out from amidst the general obscurity. In spite of this

uncertainty any account of the rise of the Hebrews must be full of interest; something much more enlightening than a mere chronicle accurate in the smallest details would have been, for the story itself is a living thing still bearing traces of the experiences of its writers.

Until about a century ago our sources of information for the history of the Jewish people were practically limited to the writings which they themselves had produced, the collection of books which we call the Old Testament. During the last century, however, a whole new field of knowledge has been made available for us by the labours of archaeologists, a full account of whose skill and daring, particularly in the early days, makes a thrilling narrative.[1] The principal result of their work has been to rescue the Hebrews from that state of isolation which a study of the Old Testament by itself makes almost inevitable. No longer do we see them living in a kind of vacuum, but moving against the vast background of the ancient Oriental world. All this is pure gain. The records lose nothing of their religious value, whilst the Hebrews become more human and, in consequence, of greater help to us who live in modern times.

The discoveries of the excavators have been made in almost every part of the ancient East, and they throw fresh light on almost every period of its long developement. They

[1] In a small booklet, *Modern Research and the Old Testament* (S.P.C.K.), I have given a brief outline of the story with descriptions of the more important discoveries.

disclose, in surprisingly vivid detail, the conditions amidst which the ancestors of the Hebrews lived in their distant homes 'beyond the river'; they tell us of Egypt from the days previous to the Exodus down to the centuries before the coming of Christ; they sketch for us the state of Palestine in the years when the Hebrews were pressing into it, and give us a knowledge of Canaanite civilization and of the religious influences which affected the followers of Jehovah, such as the Old Testament by itself does not afford.

Some of the evidence for the state of Palestine, and in particular for the religious customs of the Canaanites, comes as a result of excavations carried out at various sites in Palestine itself: the chief of these are Gezer, Taanach, Tell el-Hesy (the ancient Lachish) and Tell el-Mutesellim (the ancient Megiddo). Further evidence is to be found in the tablets discovered at Boghaz-Keui (the Hittite capital in Asia Minor), and, most important of all, in the Tell el-Amarna Letters. These tablets, some three hundred in number, form part of the state archives of Amenophis IV, a king (Pharaoh) of Egypt about 1350 B.C. They include letters received by him and his father from a most varied series of correspondents; of chief value are reports from various Egyptian representatives in Palestine. The letters as a whole throw many interesting, and even amusing, sidelights on the ancient world, and anyone who becomes familiar with their contents will feel a new respect and admiration for the civilization which produced them.

For the later periods of the history we have recovered not a few inscriptions of value: such are the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III upon which the messengers of Jehu are depicted bringing tribute to the Assyrian king; the edicts of Cyrus giving permission for exiled peoples to return to their homes; and, for the Persian period, tablets from Nippur shewing the social and commercial life of Jews living away from Palestine. Perhaps the most interesting of all the discoveries which give information of such Jews is that of the papyri found at Assuan near the first cataract of the Nile in the early years of the present century. They contain an account of a Jewish colony of the late fifth century settled quite happily in a strange land. These Jews had their own temple in which they worshipped not only Jehovah, but other deities, including goddesses, and, so far as we can tell, without any idea that they were doing anything unusual.

Unfortunately no Hebrew inscription of any value has yet been discovered, the nearest approach to one being the so-called Moabite stone, an inscription of Mesha, king of Moab (2 Kings iii, 4 f.), in which he describes, in language which might have been taken from the Old Testament, his victories over Israel.

These new discoveries, although they supplement the Old Testament, by no means supersede it, and to the Old Testament we must still turn for a record of the growth of the knowledge of God as it came to be revealed in the life of the Hebrew people.

The record, even if we do not accept the early narratives of Genesis as historical documents, covers a vast extent of time. From the wilderness period to the final loss of any vestige of independence in the days of Herod the Great is a period of over 1200 years, possibly a great deal more (see below, p. 38). To trace the course of the religious developement of the Jewish people through this great tract of time is a task beset with insuperable difficulties. For one thing our sources of information are seldom contemporary; a story which professes to represent the conditions of an early age may be in reality the product of a much later time which read back into the past the ideas of its own period. Again it has to be remembered that religious developement in any people is seldom or never uniform. Different sections of the people will have reached at any given date very different levels of religious attainment. This is true of ourselves today, it is still more true of a country like India, it was certainly true of Palestine. In the big towns foreign influences worked much more speedily as well as more radically than in the country villages; the prosperous north was more open to such influences than the rugged and less accessible south. We have therefore to be on our guard against attributing to the nation as a whole ideas and ideals which were the possession of only a few of its members.

Before proceeding to discuss in greater detail the Old Testament records, it is necessary to say something of the methods of ancient historians, methods very different from those of scholars today. The modern historian prepares

for his task by collecting all available information. He then proceeds to write his history in his own words, or if he quotes from his sources or from other writers, he signifies it by the use of quotation marks. Before, however, accepting the evidence of any source he enquires into its reliability: he asks when, where, and by whom it was written, what were the means of information at the author's disposal, was he prejudiced, and so forth. The answers to such questions can seldom be either full or completely satisfactory, and ultimately the historian must rely on his own judgement: none the less the enquiry must first be made. In ancient times this process of criticism, as we call it, was hardly ever applied; the writers of the Old Testament in particular seemed quite unable to discriminate even between contradictory accounts of the same event: in some cases they simply placed the two side by side (e.g. the accounts of the creation in Gen. i and ii), sometimes they went further and tried to combine them, whilst still retaining the contradictions (e.g. the story of the deluge in Gen. vi, 5–ix, 17). Again, the ancient historian, instead of recasting his material in his own words, preferred to incorporate it, with but slight alteration, in the narrative, without any sign, such as inverted commas, to shew that it did not come from his own pen.[1] Furthermore, we have to

[1] Those who wish to study further the methods of ancient historians should consult A. H. Sayce, *The Egypt of the Hebrews and Herodotos*, pp. 176 ff. and also E. R. Bevan, *Historical Methods in the Old Testament* in *Cambridge Biblical Essays*, pp. 1 ff.

remember that the writers of the Old Testament were not writing history for its own sake—they did not indeed claim to be writing history at all—everything was done to illustrate the dealings of Jehovah with His people and to enforce certain religious ideas. Hence, like many medieval churchmen, they included anything that was of service to this end and never stopped to ask if it were true or not: edification and not history, as we understand it today, was the end in view. It followed that much that was of value from a secular point of view was neglected. A good illustration of this neglect is the treatment of the reign of Omri, one of the most important of Israelite kings in the eyes of foreigners, but in the eyes of his own chroniclers worthy of little more than a bare mention. So too the early writers were careless to inform us about details, especially of exact names. The habit of referring merely to 'Pharaoh' (i.e. the king) has caused much confusion (e.g. if we knew the name of the Pharaoh of the Exodus the date of that event would be settled). It is quite possible that as the tradition came down no name was actually mentioned, just as a medieval story might be handed on about the 'Emperor', without specifying which Emperor was meant.

The Old Testament is not a single book but a collection coming from many different authors and from very varied periods. In all probability the traditions which it contains, and especially those which deal with the earlier periods, existed in an oral form before being reduced to writing. We can imagine the Hebrews gathered round

their camp fires listening to one of their number as he told stories of the past. Before the different tribes were united to form a single nation each of them would already have its own cycle of legends: after the union, no doubt, these stories would tend to become the property of the whole people. This accounts for a great many of the differences in detail in the Old Testament stories. Many of the most primitive of them are connected with famous shrines, probably these would be told to the pilgrims as they went up to the great festivals at those shrines.

The Old Testament, as we know it, is a collection of books. The Hebrews themselves had it in the form of three collections: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The books in the English Bible do not follow the order of the original Hebrew Bible, but that of the Vulgate, or Latin version. The first collection was the Law. This consisted of the same five books as in our version but at first they were not given the name of Moses.[1] Behind these five books, often referred to as the Pentateuch, lie many different traditions. Scholars have arranged these traditions into a number of separate groups or sources, which for convenience of reference are called by different letters. J, for example, represents the group of traditions which came from the south; this source uses the personal name for God, JHVH (the original pronunciation has been lost,

[1] The book which Hilkiah found in the Temple (2 Kings xxii, 8) was simply called 'a law book': contrast 'the book of Moses' in Neh. xiii, 1.

it was perhaps Yahweh or Yahu, certainly not Jehovah, which was a late invention of the Christian era).[1] E is a group of similar stories from the north; in it the word *Elohim* (= GOD in a plural form) is substituted for the personal name. D represents the school of Deuteronomy, that is, the followers of the eighth-century prophets whose teaching is summarized in Dt. xii–xxvi (see further, pp. 57 f. below). P is the symbol of the later priestly school of writers which gave to the books their final form.

The second of the collections in the Hebrew Bible is that of the Prophets. This has two divisions, the Former and the Latter, each consisting of four books. To the Former belonged, strangely to us who speak of historical books, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings: to the Latter, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and (not Daniel but) the Twelve (i.e. the minor prophets regarded as a single book).

The third collection, the Writings, contained the rest of the Scriptures. It included poetic books such as Psalms and the Song of Songs; historical books such as Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles (the last book in the Hebrew Bible); books dealing with philosophical problems such as Job and Ecclesiastes, as well as stories like Ruth, Esther, and Daniel.

After the Fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. the Jews were widely dispersed and came under many different

[1] The earliest form of the name is simply YV (perhaps pronounced as Yaw). See further A. E. Cowley, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1920), pp. 175 f.

influences and some of them adopted foreign ways. In Alexandria, after a time, they ceased to speak the Hebrew language and Greek was used even in religious matters. To provide for the needs of these Greek-speaking Jews the Old Testament, beginning with the Law, was translated. But an inspired volume, so it was supposed, cannot be translated except by people possessing an inspiration equal to that of the original writers (that is why orthodox Moslems will not allow the Koran to be translated). To meet this difficulty, and to put their version on the same level as the Hebrew original, the Jews of Alexandria invented the legend that the Law had been translated by seventy different scholars and that their renderings were identical, a sure proof of inspiration. In consequence of this tradition the whole of this version is known as the Septuagint (LXX). It differs from the Hebrew in numerous places but chiefly by including a number of books and parts of books which had been written later and are now called Apocryphal. These books are of great value as giving insight into the life and thought of later Judaism. Some, such as 1 and 2 Maccabees, contain historical information; others, such as Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus, deal with religious problems. We should be very much poorer if the LXX had not handed them down to us.

In addition to these Apocryphal books which are received by the Church as part of the Bible, a number of writings have survived which are also of great value for the latest period of Jewish history. Such books as Jubilees, the

Ecclesiasticus known as Enoch, and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs are extremely valuable. More will be said about them when we come to deal with the later developments of Jewish thought.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE SEMITES

AMONG the legends which go to make up the early chapters of Genesis there is one which professes to give an account of the various races which inhabit the earth. After the Flood, so the story goes, the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japhet, the sons of Noah, overspread the earth (ix, 18 f.). From Shem were descended the children of Eber (i.e. the Hebrews) as well as other nations. The list in Gen. x, 21 ff. is difficult to understand since it includes Elam and Lud (Lydia) who were certainly not of the same race as the rest, whilst it omits Canaan and Zidon who were. The whole scheme is an artificial genealogy designed to account for existing facts and probably some kind of geographical arrangement underlies it.

It is, however, sufficiently accurate to enable historians to give to the so-called descendants of Shem (including Canaan and Phoenicia but excluding Elam and Lud) the name Semites. Since the Jewish people are part of the Semitic race and since at every stage of their history ideas and customs inherited from the remote past can be recognized, in tracing out their developement we must go back to their Semitic forefathers so far as information is available.

Through the labours of archaeologists and others our knowledge of the primitive Semites has become, during the past few generations, much more ample than it was before: but additional information has served to make the story more complex and on not a few points there is much uncertainty.

The original home of the Semites was probably Arabia, that vast peninsula which has at all times been notable as a breeding ground of men. But if Arabia is famous for producing men, it produces little else. The quickly multiplying tribes of the desert are therefore ever seeking to invade the fertile lands which, like a vast crescent stretching from Egypt down to the Persian Gulf, hem them in. At certain widely separated intervals there is, it would seem, a noticeable drying up of the oases which largely provide for the nomads and their flocks: this causes migration on a vast scale, and some historians think that they can perceive, at intervals of about a thousand years, the recurrence of such movements. The sudden appearance of hordes of unknown peoples has time and again wrought an unexpected change in the fortunes of nations and altered the whole course of history: we need but think of the Gauls, the Huns, and the Tartars. With similar effect these resistless waves of Semites poured out of Arabia.

The first wave must have occurred before the dawn of history, since from the earliest times Semitic peoples are found in North Babylonia. This wave, which we may date approximately in 4000 B.C., probably amalgamated with

the native peoples of North Babylonia to form the Assyrians. It then flowed south and for a time, under the famous Sargon of Agade, overran the Sumerians, an ancient people who had perhaps come from Central Asia. Another wave followed in the middle of the next millennium, and again the Sumerians, whose cities had in the meantime undergone a brilliant revival, were the sufferers. In another direction it went down into Syria to form the Canaanites, finally spending itself upon Egypt, whose records bear testimony to a number of raids by Semites between the VIIth and XIIth dynasties, culminating in the conquest of the land by the Hyksos who ruled it from 1800 to 1580 B.C.

According to their own traditions the Hebrew peoples began their career when a certain Abram migrated from Ur, doubtless the city near the head of the Persian Gulf where excavations have recently been carried out. He moved first to Haran in Syria and thence southwards, penetrating even into Egypt before returning to make a final settlement in Canaan.[1] We hear of further expeditions down to Egypt by his descendants and finally of a lengthy

[1] Abram may have left Ur because of changes in religion. The worship of Sin, the moon-god, was abolished by Hammurabi at Babylon in favour of that of Shamash, the sun-god. Ur was a famous sanctuary of Sin, as was Haran to which Abram first journeyed. It would seem that the primitive Hebrews were moon-worshippers. By a further coincidence their sacred mountain (Sinai) also bore the name of Sin. See further C. F. Burney, *Judges*, pp. 249 ff.

sojourn there by some of them. All these traditions seem to be echoes of the events outlined above, for, as the lists in Gen. x, 21 ff. shew, the Hebrew writers were in the habit of personifying tribes. We must therefore regard the narratives of the patriarchs as describing, not the movements of individual chiefs with a small band of followers, but widespread migrations affecting large areas and lasting probably for centuries.

A third wave occurred about 1350 B.C. when the Hebrews and other allied peoples pressed down into Palestine. The Tell el-Amarna Tablets, which refer to this period, contain many references to the incursions of the Habiru (i.e. Hebrews). The word Hebrew is not derived from a mythical Eber, as the Old Testament writers in their desire for personification supposed (Gen. xi, 14 ff.), but really means 'those from the other side' (i.e. of the river Euphrates), and it would seem to have been given to the original Hebrews by the people amongst whom they came. Strictly speaking, the whole of the descendants of 'Eber' are Hebrews, so that Midianites and Edomites have as much right to the name as the offspring of Jacob, but in actual practice the word came to be limited to the latter.

Again a thousand years went by, and sometime before 312 B.C. the territories east of Jordan were invaded by the Nabateans, a small movement in comparison with those which had gone before, but having important consequences in as much as it drove the Edomites into the territory of the Jews and led eventually to their absorption in that nation.

The last great Semitic wave belongs to a time later than our period: when it came, and again some thousand years had elapsed, it took the form of a great religious movement, and the followers of Mohammed not only conquered Syria and North Africa but threatened the whole of Europe.

The Semitic peoples are commonly divided up into four groups according to their geographical situation. To the south are the Arabs; to the east the great Mesopotamian powers, Babylon and Assyria; to the north the Syrians (or more correctly the Aramaeans); to the west the Phoenicians and Hebrews. In spite of occasional extensions such as those of the Phoenicians and the later developements of Islam, the Semites, as a whole, have been strangely afraid of venturing far from the North Syrian desert which has in all ages been the centre round which they have been grouped. One reason for their clinging to a comparatively small area is their inability to live in any but a hot climate, another is their instinctive dislike of the sea.

Such then is in outline the story of the rise of the Semitic peoples. We must turn now to consider the race as a whole and attempt to describe its distinctive features. This task is difficult with any people, since these are liable to alteration through the lapse of centuries and the consequent changes of environment. With the Semites it is perhaps less difficult than with other branches of the human family, for they have ever been tenacious of their customs and of their language (important evidence for national characteristics), and even their physical type has been strangely persistent.

Furthermore, in Arabia little change took place before the rise of Islam. There the nomads have remained with but little mixture of alien stocks and exposed but little to outside influences. It follows that the Arabs of the generations before Mohammed, even though they belong to the Christian era, provide better evidence for early Semitic beliefs and customs than the ancient Babylonians. These latter, in conquering the Sumerians, were enormously affected by the culture and religious customs of the conquered. The great principle enunciated by Robertson Smith, a pioneer in this line of study, should be borne in mind: 'in matters of this sort, ancient and primitive are not synonymous terms'.

What then are the characteristics of the Semitic peoples? First of all, they are to be placed among the active rather than the contemplative races of mankind; their emotions are easily aroused and so their activities often depend on impulse, especially the impulse which comes from eloquence. To this trait must be attributed not only the reckless generosity which marks the Semites but also their occasional outbursts of ferocious cruelty. But whilst they are energetic and brave, they lack the power of endurance: they can rise to a great effort, but once the effort has been made, if it fails, disillusionment seems swiftly to follow.

Another characteristic is a deep racial pride. This tends to shew itself especially in regard to the narrow circle of the clan or family, and has not seldom stood in the way of

wider unities. It shews itself also in a tendency to despotism, which is not unnatural in a race which continually breeds outstanding personalities.[1] Finally there is a spirit of restlessness, perhaps to be expected in the blood of those who are either nomads themselves or the descendants of a long line of nomads. The ceaseless movement from one pasture-ground to another during the centuries has stamped itself upon the Semite, and even when he has left the desert for 'the sown', and settled down to agriculture, he must still from time to time go forth and raid his neighbours.[2]

Finally the Semites, speaking generally, are lacking in originality, especially in their culture. They prefer massive effects rather than beauty, and their artistic achievements, at any rate in Mesopotamia, fell far short of those of their Sumerian predecessors: whilst even in religion they were content to assimilate rather than to invent.[3]

These various characteristics of the Semitic mind naturally find expression in their religious ideas and customs. Taken as a whole, Semitic religions are remarkable for their simple and practical nature. Those who practise

[1] Democracy has never flourished among Semitic peoples: even the Phoenicians were undemocratic in their political organization, as at Carthage.

[2] This habit is by no means peculiar to Semites: it marked the early days of Rome when 'a raid upon neighbouring territory was almost a normal Latin way of occupying the idle months between harvest and the time of sowing': *Camb. Anc. Hist.* VII, 400.

[3] See C. L. Woolley, *The Sumerians*, pp. 77, 179. (Oxford.)

them do so with a directness and fervour which is a reflexion of their racial character. In early days there was little curiosity as to any life beyond the present—in this they were very different from the Egyptians who seemed to be obsessed with the idea of the Future Life—and the grave was at best a gloomy region where shadows dwelt in a miserable existence. The Semites then were intensely practical in their religion, but at the same time they were not without a touch of idealism, a characteristic which made them especially conscious of failure and shortcoming; that feeling which in the higher types of religion we call a sense of sin.

The religion of primitive man, in whatever part of the world he may chance to be found, shews many striking similarities. As he developes, variations, both of ritual and of belief, begin to appear as different conditions and influences are encountered. Even practices and ideas which we usually speak of as typically Semitic probably had their origin in earlier stages of the oriental world, and are not without their parallels in other contemporary races, especially those living around the Mediterranean basin. A belief in the presence of gods in springs, or trees, for example, is widespread, as well as the custom of sacrifice, and the holding of wild and licentious festivals.

A good deal of our knowledge of the early beliefs and customs of the Semites comes from the Old Testament itself, though in most cases the early, superstitious element in the stories has been toned down by later editors:

enough, however, remains to enable us to recover fresh illustrations of Semitic religion.

The first religious ideas were probably connected with the powers behind nature as they were manifested in the various processes which resulted in harvest and the increase of living things. Man was always surrounded by spirits whom he could not afford to ignore. To these beings, localized in certain places and objects, the Semites gave the name of El, a name which survived in Hebrew, and is used of the supreme GOD Himself, as also of lesser spiritual beings.

It was the belief of Robertson Smith that in its earliest stages religion among the Semites had a totemistic element. A totem is usually an animal supposed to be the home of the god, and therefore to be worshipped by the tribe which might call itself by the name of the totem, or even claim to be descended from it. The presence both of tribes and also of individuals amongst the Israelites who bore the names of animals, together with the fact that even as late as the period of the Exile animals were secretly worshipped in the temple (Ezek. viii, 10 ff.), gives some support to this view.

The god was regarded as a member of the tribe and probably in some cases as its father in the actual physical sense (Gen. vi, 4). It followed that no other god could be worshipped without disloyalty. But though every people believed in the reality of the gods of their neighbours just as much as in the reality of their own, a god could only be worshipped normally in his own land: cf. David's com-

plaint that Saul was sending him forth to worship other gods (1 Sam. xxvi, 10: cf. Ruth i, 14 ff.). Since the god was a member of the tribe, he joined with them in their warfare, being represented by some outward symbol such as the ark of the Hebrews (1 Sam. iv, 7 ff.).

Although the god and his worshippers were often held to be akin, the gap between them was usually felt to be great, and mankind cowered in the presence of the divine.[1] It naturally followed that anything belonging to the god was 'holy', that is, separated from common use. It must be remembered that in its earliest use this word had no ethical connotation, it is only as our ideas of what is fitting in regard to GOD have been purified that 'holy' has come to mean pure and good.

Common to all Semitic religions was the worship of one or more goddesses, the Ishtar of the Babylonians, the Queen of Heaven of the Hebrews (Jer. xliv, 17 ff.). Traces of her can be found in the Old Testament in the name Ashtoreth. As late as the fifth century, Jews in Egypt, with every apparent belief in their own orthodoxy, worshipped in their temple at Elephantine not only Jehovah but also other deities including Anath-Jau: that is Anath, the consort of Jau (i.e. Jehovah).

Lesser spirits, both good and evil, had their place in the beliefs of the Semites. From the earliest times evil spirits or demons were held to exist, and the belief had already

[1] In Islam (the word means 'submission') we have the logical conclusion of the Semitic attitude.

found acceptance among the Sumerians. Later Semitic thought is full of such beings, and even the extravagances of *The Arabian Nights* exaggerate but slightly the attitude of the common people. Even in the Old Testament there are still traces of mysterious demons such as Lilith (Is. xxxiv, 11 f.) and Azazel, the demon of the wilderness to whom the scapegoat was dedicated (Lev. xvi), as well as of demigods (Gen. vi, 4). There can also be but little doubt that in the original story of Jacob at the ford of Jabbok (Gen. xxxii, 24 ff.) his assailant was a night demon (he had to fly before daybreak), the spirit who haunted the ford.[1]

A few words must be devoted to the customs of worship among the Semites. These were very simple. Wherever a deity had manifested his presence, in a well or a tree, or by some exhibition of power, such as a lightning stroke, altars were erected. There was no regular priesthood (even in Israel this was a late developement), the sacrifices being offered by the worshipper or by the head of the family. Beside the altar pillars or stones were erected, and perhaps rudely carved images. Among the settled peoples festivals were held at stated intervals to mark the progress of agricultural operations. As to the origin of sacrifice many theories are held. The institution may have begun with the idea that gods, like men, needed food and drink. Akin to

[1] In Lev. xvi the Authorized Version renders Azazel by the word 'scapegoat' and so conceals any reference to the demon. The Revised Version translates correctly.

this theory is that which regards the offering as a common meal in which the god and his worshippers take part and so strengthen the bond between them. Another theory regards the sacrifice as a kind of tribute such as would be paid to an earthly king. These two theories of the origin of sacrifice were capable of developement to higher ideas, but often enough the sacrificial offering was little more than a bribe intended to keep the god in good humour, so that he would refrain from doing damage to the offerers or their possessions (the belief in gods who are capable of doing wanton injuries is still found in the Old Testament: see 1 Sam. vi, 19; 2 Sam. vi, 7; 2 Kings xvii, 24 ff.).

The beginnings of Semitic religion thus go back into remote antiquity: its later developements in the great religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, directly influence the modern world. But though these three religions trace back their origins to individual teachers, behind the founders lies what Robertson Smith has called 'the old religious tradition...into which successive generations of the Semitic race grew up as it were instinctively, taking it as a matter of course that they should believe and act as their fathers had done before them'. With these old beliefs the newer religions had to make their account, rejecting here and assimilating there, but always affected by the old. To the less well instructed the attraction of the old was always potent, hence the 'backsliding' which called forth the constant denunciations of the Hebrew prophets.

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CHAPTER THREE

HEBREW ORIGINS

THE story of the Hebrews begins in Egypt, whither some of the tribes had gone down to escape from famine in Canaan. Hebrew tradition held that all the tribes were in Egypt, but it is safer to suppose that only a part were there, and that during the long interval between the events themselves and their being put into writing, traditions belonging to a few of the tribes were referred to the nation as a whole. In considering this question we get but little help from Egyptian inscriptions. They record, however, that the *'Aperiu*, who probably included the Hebrews among them, were slaves in the land. But since *'Aperiu* are found in Egypt in the time of Ramses IV (1172–1166 B.C.) they cannot be identified with the Hebrews unless some of the latter had failed to make good their escape. A further difficulty lies in the fact that there is a reference to *Ysirael* in Canaan about 1220 B.C., this reference is, I think, to tribes who either never left Canaan or who had escaped before the others.

The Exodus was preceded by a time of fierce oppression, and it was only after many vicissitudes of fortune that the Hebrews, under their great leader Moses, succeeded in escaping from 'the land of bondage'. As a child Moses had been brought up in the household of Pharaoh's daughter,

but the sympathy which he felt for his oppressed countrymen led him on one occasion to step in and protect one of them from the cruelty of an Egyptian: in the struggle the oppressor was slain and nothing was left to Moses but to seek safety in flight. He went to Midian and there remained for some years until the call came to him to free the people. With the call there went a fresh revelation of Jehovah, to whose sacred mountain he had been led as he followed his flock.

The flight of the Hebrews from Egypt had been preceded by a series of disasters to the Egyptians, which culminated in the mysterious death of the first-born. The panic of the Egyptians and their superstitious fear allowed the fugitives to get away without any immediate attempt to stop them. But the Pharaoh quickly recovered and a detachment of light troops was sent in pursuit. When the Israelites saw that they were being pursued they in their turn gave way to panic, but Moses led them through a marshy lake (the 'sea of reeds' it is invariably called in the Old Testament) and got them safely to the other side. In this they were aided by a strong wind which providentially blew back the waters.[1] The Egyptian chariots which attempted to follow them were soon in difficulties in the boggy ground,

[1] A similar incident is recorded in the career of Cyrus (*Camb. Anc. Hist.* VI, 6) who was enabled to cross the Euphrates by the shifting of the wind: also of Alexander the Great when the sudden turning of the wind enabled his army to wade round Mount Climax (*Camb. Anc. Hist.* VI, 364). In each case the changing of the wind was taken as a sign of the divine favour.

and, the wind dropping, the waters flowed back and drowned many of them before they could get back to the shore. This incident, regarded as an exhibition of the power of Jehovah, the god of Moses, deeply impressed the people, and the escape from Egypt became the type and pattern of every other deliverance (Mic. vii, 15; Jer. xxiii, 7).

The people continued their journey to Sinai,[1] and there Israel and Jehovah were united on the basis of a covenant. Hitherto god and people had been regarded as of one kin, and therefore linked together by a natural bond: relationship by covenant was a new thing in religion and marked a great advance, since its basis was moral and ethical. It seems probable that Jehovah was originally the god worshipped by Jethro the Midianite, who, as a descendant of Abraham, may well have retained the religion which his kinsmen had lost in the bondage of Egypt. There followed a period during which the tribes wandered in the neighbourhood of Kadesh. The meaning of Kadesh is 'sanctuary', and the place was no doubt the religious centre which held the tribes of the confederation together.[2] After

[1] The actual position of Sinai is very doubtful, since the various statements in the Old Testament for the most part require a site near Kadesh or Edom. Probably a number of traditions, referring to different sites, have been combined. In any case the location in the so-called Sinai peninsula is not found before the third century A.D. See further S. R. Driver, *Exodus* (Camb. Bible), pp. 186 ff.

[2] Confederations based on a common sanctuary are familiar phenomena among primitive tribes (e.g. the Latins): sometimes the use of the same sanctuary seems to have led to political union.

an indefinite period (the forty years of the Old Testament) a serious attempt was made to invade Canaan. But the leader to whose courage and wisdom the people owed their unity (such as it was) was fated to die before the actual entry had been made.

With Moses we feel for the first time that we are in touch with a real person and that history has begun. No doubt legends have gathered round his name, just as in the case of Alfred the Great, but none the less he is real. He seems profoundly to have impressed the tribes who were in Egypt, and they were probably the most important members of the confederation. Moses is known chiefly as a lawgiver, and justly so, for although we cannot for a moment suppose that all the laws attributed to Moses were actually his work, yet unless there had been a considerable nucleus around which the rest could be gathered the tradition would never have arisen. Much of the work of Moses was in the nature of codifying (to adopt a modern term), the gathering together of already existing material into an ordered system.

It was, however, as a religious teacher or prophet that Moses primarily deserves the gratitude of mankind, and an attempt to give a short summary of the faith of the Hebrew people as instructed by him must now be made.

The object of the nation's worship was the God who had revealed Himself at Sinai. Some Hebrew writers think that even before that event Jehovah had been known to the Hebrews by name (Gen. xii, 1), but they were by no means

agreed upon the point (Ex. vi, 3). Like other Semitic peoples, they believed in the existence of the gods of their neighbours, and the possibility that they might be worshipped by Israelites was guarded against in the first of the ten commandments. The religion of the people in the desert was no doubt fierce and sanguinary: but it contained within it the germs of high moral achievement, and of a purer and nobler conception of God. Its high character was due to the teaching of Moses, teaching which he claimed had come to him from Jehovah Himself. Later ages see no reason for questioning the substantial truth of his claim. For whatever may have been 'the process by which Moses became possessed of the principles embodied in the Law, they may justly be regarded as derived from God. The best warrant for the Divine commission with which he professed to be invested is the character of the work which he accomplished'.[1] The depth and character of this work was speedily to be tested by the entry into the promised land.

Before considering the story of the conquest of Palestine a brief sketch of its geographical features will be useful. In its widest sense the name Palestine covers the territory between Edom in the south and Lebanon in the north. By a narrower usage it stretches 'from Dan to Beersheba', a distance of some 140 miles. At its widest extent, in the south, it measures 90 miles, but in the north it is only 25 miles across. The land as a whole is not a rich one, but a

[1] G. W. Wade, *Old Test. Hist.* p. 164. (Methuen.)

few parts of it (e.g. the plain of Esdraelon and the Jordan valley) are very fertile. Most of it, however, is barren, and will only yield its products to immense efforts of cultivation. It is a country of mountains but of few rivers, Jordan and Kishon being the only considerable streams: the water supply therefore comes for the most part from springs and wells. The climate is very varied, corresponding with a variety in physical formation. This aspect of Palestine has been strikingly presented by C. F. Kent.

> A half-day's journey brings the traveller from the winter snows of Jerusalem to the tropical luxuriance of the Jordan valley, and another day of travel will introduce him to the barren wastes of the Arabian desert. From certain vantage-points one may see the columns of vapour rising from that great cauldron, the Dead Sea, and with almost the same glance behold the snowy heights of Mount Hermon. The temperate, tropical, and frigid zones are each represented.... Corresponding to these differences in climate are the contrasts in flora and fauna. The firs overshadow the palms. Here the wolf of the north contends with the leopard of the south over the carcass of the gazelle of the temperate zone. It is evident why the Bible is a book intelligible to people living in all climes, since the land which is its background is an epitome of the entire world.[1]

As a training ground for a people who were destined to play a prominent part in the religious history of mankind nothing better could have been found: for Palestine, standing as it does on the bridge which connects Asia and Africa, is at once secluded and yet not isolated.

The people who lived in Palestine were, like the Hebrews

[1] *Hist. of the Hebrew People*, I, 23 f. (Scribners.)

themselves, of Semitic stock; the Old Testament gives lists of various nations, but they were probably for the most part Canaanites. This people had developed a comparatively high civilization in which Egyptian and Babylonian influences had been combined with a certain amount of native culture. They lived in walled cities and, if we can trust the accounts which the Egyptians give of the spoils captured from them, were luxurious in their tastes and possessed of sufficient wealth to indulge them. But the land, as described by the Tell el-Amarna Tablets, was full of disorder and internally weak.

Three distinct traditions of the conquest have been preserved in the Old Testament. Writers after the Exile give an ideal account of what the conquest should have been like: they describe the speedy subjugation of the whole land by a united Israel (such as did not exist until generations later) and the partition of the territory among the several tribes (Josh. xiii–xxiv). The account of the Deuteronomic school is similar though not quite so idealized: by it two campaigns are required, one in the north and the other in the south (Josh. i–xii). The earliest and most probable account is given in Judges i–ii, 5; according to this account the various tribes go forth each to conquer a territory for itself, and meet with but partial success (cf. Ex. xxiii, 30; Deut. vii, 22).[1]

[1] The possibility, or even probability, of a preliminary victory by the united tribes over an allied force of Canaanites must not, however, be ignored.

There can be but little doubt that the actual conquest of Palestine was a long process, and that most of the progress was made, not so much by arms, as by alliance and even by amalgamation with Canaanites. The Israelite tribes of Asher and Gad appear actually to be named after pagan deities. It will be remembered that in the genealogy which the Hebrew writers invented according to their custom (cf. p. 17) to account for the rise of their nation some of the tribes are the descendants, not of the full wives of Jacob, but of concubines. It is probable that in this distinction we have a recognition of the fact that these tribes were not pure-blooded Israelites but a mixture of Israelites and Canaanites.

The actual entry, according to Hebrew tradition, was by way of Jericho, that is from the east. The more obvious way from Kadesh was from the south, and there are not wanting traces of an attempt, which may have been more successful than the Old Testament writers in general admit, to enter from that quarter (see Num. xxi, 1–4, with the present writer's note in West. Com.). The later tribe of Judah which seems to have had an element of non-Israelite blood in it (e.g. Caleb and Othniel) may well have come up from the south by way of Hebron (cf. Judg. i, 8 ff.). It should be remembered that for a long time Judah was hardly considered part of Israel, and in the Song of Deborah (Judg. v) it is simply ignored, receiving neither praise for joining in the war nor blame for failing to come to the help of Jehovah. The Canaanites long after the original conquest still held a

line of strong fortresses including Jerusalem, Aijalon, and Gezer, which cut off Israel from the south.

It was said above that the religion which Moses had taught the Israelites was to be tested by the entry into Canaan. To this subject we must now return. When the people came into Canaan they found a well-developed religious usage already in possession. This usage followed, in the main, that of other settled Semites. Old Canaanite sanctuaries such as Gezer and Taanach have been excavated and they have yielded altars, standing stones and the usual accompaniments of worship: in addition traces of infant sacrifices have been discovered. The principal god who was worshipped was Hadad, the Addu of the Tell el-Amarna Tablets, a thunder deity.

The settlement of Israel in Canaan meant a struggle between their religion and that of the inhabitants. Political unity gradually came, as we saw above, in part by conquest, but also in part by amalgamation. The same was true of religious unity. Jehovah became the accepted God of the people, but many of the attributes of Hadad or Baal were given to Him, and the means by which He was to be approached were also modified. As is well known, Jehovah was actually called Baal even in the days of the monarchy. The religious ideas of two Semitic peoples, even though one was nomadic and the other settled, would be so much alike that amalgamation would be a simple matter. This was especially true of the methods of worship. Archaeology, in the words of Dr S. A. Cook, 'does not reveal that hiatus

which would have ensued had there been a dislocation of earlier conditions by invading Israelite tribes; earlier forms are simply developed, the evolution is a progressive one'.[1] That Israel should have adopted Canaanite ideas and customs is not surprising. Their god was a god of the desert, the gods of Palestine were gods of the soil, and in learning from the Canaanites the means by which the land was to be cultivated, they learnt also to propitiate the local Baalim who, from remote antiquity, had been regarded as the owners of the soil. Even in the days of Hosea men who worshipped Jehovah still believed that their crops came from Baal (Hos. ii, 8).

After the conquest came the period of the judges which later thought again misrepresented, picturing each judge as the ruler of a united nation. A careful study of the Old Testament, however, shews that the authority of each judge was only local, and that the Israelites were almost as disunited as their Canaanite predecessors had been. This disunion was in part due to the country, for Palestine, like Greece, tends naturally to the developement of small communities: in part it was due to the unconquered Canaanite fortresses which served to accentuate the lines of geographical separation. This internal separation was a source of weakness to the people when enemies from outside were threatening its very life. There was, however, one link which kept the tribes together: their common faith in Jehovah. The greatest collection of tribes was called out in

[1] *Religion of Ancient Palestine*, p. 115. (Constable).

His name and to fight His battles (Judg. v, 23). The period of the judges is often regarded as one of degeneration from the first enthusiasm which began the conquest of the land. This is probably true, but allowance must be made for the difficulties with which the people were faced during a time of settlement and transition, when new ideas and surroundings were working strongly upon them. But the unrest and lawlessness of the time shewed the need of more settled rule and of the establishment of a central authority.

In religion there was but slight developement. There is no trace in this period of an elaborately organized priesthood, though the number of sanctuaries must have been considerable, and they appear to have been scattered up and down the whole of the land. These sanctuaries seem to have been in the care of various families, but the Aaronic priesthood, afterwards to be supreme in Israel, had apparently not yet emerged. Professional priests or Levites are found wandering from place to place (Judg. xvii, 7, xix, 1) and their ministry was regarded as more potent than that of other folk (Judg. xvii, 13); but there is no monopoly of the priesthood.

Religion was still largely ritualistic and had not yet begun to exercise much influence upon morals, the standard of which was very low. This we gather not so much from deliberate statements as from the attitude of the writers to the deeds of Samson, Gideon, and Jael, deeds which revolt the conscience of Christians.

ADDITIONAL NOTE

(*The Date of the Exodus*)

Since the Old Testament writers have failed to give us the names of the Pharaohs of the Oppression and of the Exodus, we have to depend upon conjecture in attempting to date the event. Four different theories have been advanced. (*a*) The earliest date is that suggested by Josephus who regards the Exodus as being another account of the expulsion of the Hyksos (*c.* 1580). This theory has been accepted by some great scholars in the present day. One attractive feature about it is that it suggests the possibility of the protector of Moses being the famous Hatshepsut. (*b*) The age of the Tell el-Amarna Letters (*c.* 1450–1370) appeals to others. This theory places the Exodus in the reign of Amenophis II and it is supported by the identification of the Hebrews with the *Habiru* of the Letters. (*c*) The traditional date is the period of the XIXth dynasty (*c.* 1225) with Ramses II as the oppressor, and Merneptah as the Pharaoh of the Exodus. (*d*) Another suggested date is in the XXth dynasty. The truth of the matter is, in the opinion of the present writer, that there were a number of separate movements at different times by tribes who were afterwards absorbed in the Israelite confederation. Later thought combined them into a single movement.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE RISE OF THE PROPHETS

In order to describe the rise of the prophets in Israel in any satisfactory manner it will be necessary to give a brief sketch of the history of the period; for the message and importance of the prophets can only be understood against the background of contemporary events.

Unfortunately no records from the prophets themselves for this period have come down to us, the age of the so-called written prophets has not yet dawned. There is, however, a good deal of material in the books of Samuel and Kings which is undoubtedly early and sufficiently reliable for us to gain a general idea of the actual developement, even if there remains much uncertainty as to details.

The last of the judges was Samuel. In his early years a threat had arisen which was to menace, for several generations, the very existence of the Israelites as an independent people. This threat came from the expansion of the Philistines.

This people had appeared in the land to which they were to give their name (Palestine = Philistia) in the reign of Ramses III of Egypt, when, in company with a number of other peoples, they attempted to invade the Delta. Their original home was Caphtor (Am. ix, 7; Deut. ii, 23) by

which the Old Testament writers probably meant Crete, though perhaps part of the adjacent mainland of Asia Minor should also be included in the term. This attempt and another which followed it were defeated by the Pharaoh after desperate fighting. The invaders, prevented from settling in the wealthy land of Egypt, were driven to find a home along the coastland, below the Judean foothills, where eventually they grouped themselves round five centres. Their settlement corresponded roughly in time with the Hebrew occupation of the hill-country to the east. In the natural process of expansion both peoples gradually approached one another and sooner or later conflict was inevitable.

The first record of any definite struggle is contained in the bare statement that Shamgar slew some Philistines with an ox-goad (Judg. iii, 31), but it is likely that the Danites, and possibly other Israelite tribes, were driven from the south by the Philistines to seek fresh homes in the north.[1]

From their settlements on the coast the Philistines slowly pushed their way eastward, no longer as mere spoilers but as permanent conquerors. A battle was fought at Eben-ezer in which the Israelites were completely overthrown and their national palladium, the ark, captured (1 Sam. iv). It is possible that the superiority of the Philistines was due to the possession of iron weapons,

[1] In the Song of Deborah the Danites are living by the sea (Judg. v, 17), later they moved north (Judg. xviii, 1).

which they are thought by some to have been the first to bring into Palestine (cf. 1 Sam. xiii, 19 ff.).

The overwhelming danger drove the people back on Jehovah, and, as in the days of Deborah, a wave of religious fanaticism swept over the nation. A Holy War was preached by the bands of prophets who seem at this juncture suddenly to have risen into prominence. The book of Samuel tells of a successful encounter with the enemy under the guidance of the prophet (1 Sam. vii): but the victory was either greatly exaggerated, or its consequences disappointing, for the whole situation remained desperately grave.

Before continuing the account of the Philistine war, it will be well to say something about the prophet and the conception of the office held in ancient Israel. The office must be distinguished from that of the priest; the duty of the latter, in addition to the care of the sanctuary, was to give judicial and oracular decisions, probably by means of the sacred lot. The prophet adopted different methods and played a different part. At this stage of Israel's religious developement, the current conception of the office was still very primitive, and the prophet himself was not regarded with particular respect. There seem to have been at least two distinct types, the Seer (*Ḥozeh* or *Ro'eh*) and the Prophet proper (*Nabhi*). The seer, as the name itself shews, had special insight which included a knowledge of the future. His methods were quiet and unemotional, and if Samuel can be regarded as typical of the order, he might

occupy a position of social importance. The prophet or *nabhi* was much more like a modern dervish. Wild ecstatic fits not infrequently came upon him, and his whole manner of conducting himself led to his often being regarded as a madman (cf. 2 Kings ix, 11). According to the statement in 1 Sam. ix, 9, the prophet gradually drove out the seer, but at the same time he took over some of his characteristics, such as second-sight (2 Kings vi, 17).

The movement seems to have been carried on by the prophets forming themselves into bands around some leader, who became their 'father'. These bands often gave way to wild fanatical outbursts which were liable to excite emotional onlookers into joining in their exercises (1 Sam. x, 10 ff., xix, 20 ff.). In later times one, like Amos, who felt that he had a message from Jehovah repudiated all connexion with them (Amos vii, 14). In spite, however, of their strange and unhealthy methods, these early prophets did represent a real stage in the developement of Israelite religion; for it was to Jehovah that they pointed men and it was in His service that their deeds were done.

We return now to our narrative. In their state of panic at the progress of the Philistine invasion the people felt the need of some permanent leader who, like the kings of the nations around them, should lead them forth to battle. Such a leader was speedily found for them, apparently by Samuel himself, in the person of Saul, a gigantic Benjaminite. He soon overcame the murmurs which, probably through tribal jealousy, had greeted his selection, and a

determined effort was made to free the people from their oppressors. The destruction of a garrison[1] by Jonathan, Saul's son (1 Sam. xiii, 3), gave the signal for the rising. The Philistines acted promptly and Saul soon found that he could place little reliance on his own followers (1 Sam. xiii, 6 f.). But Jonathan again distinguished himself and by a sudden onslaught brought confusion to the invaders (1 Sam. xiv, 1 ff.).

In a pause between the encounters with the Philistines, Saul, at the command of Samuel, conducted a punitive expedition against the Bedawin tribe of the Amalekites. He was completely successful, but unfortunately he quarrelled with Samuel over the disposal of the spoil and the two never again acted together (1 Sam. xv). In the book of Samuel two strands of narrative seem to have been combined, representing two very distinct points of view. These differences correspond with different attitudes towards the whole subject of the monarchy itself which are probably the result of later reflexion upon the workings of the institution. In one strand of narrative it is Jehovah who gives the king (1 Sam. ix, 16); in the other it is the people who demand him, and Jehovah, not without indignation, falls in with their wishes (1 Sam. viii, 4 ff. x, 17 ff.).

At length Saul, borne down by the burden of the unequal war and of the dissensions caused by Samuel's repudiation,

[1] The meaning of the word is uncertain; some render it *trophy*, others *officer*.

gave way to fits of terrible depression; but to the end he retained his heroic valour. The end was indeed not far off. Once more the Philistines, having marched north, swept down into the land, and a life of storm and stress ended in a tragic death on the slopes of Mount Gilboa.

Thus Saul fell, and his efforts to free Israel seemed to have ended in complete failure. But such was not really the case; he had shewn the people the value of unity, as well as the weakness which follows division. If he had failed, at least he had pointed a way along which his successor could travel with better fortune.

This successor was David, a young Judean of Bethlehem, who like Saul had been chosen by Samuel. The story of his early years is obscure. In some way or other he was brought to Saul's notice, either as a skilled player on the harp (1 Sam. xvi, 14 ff.), or through his valiant defeat of a Philistine giant (1 Sam. xvii, 55 ff.). Unfortunately he quickly aroused Saul's jealousy, and in spite of the pleadings of the monarch's own son, Jonathan, he was driven into exile and took service with the Philistines (1 Sam. xxvii, 1–3, xxix, 1–4). On Saul's death, David became king at Hebron, his own tribe of Judah forming the greater part of his subjects. No doubt he was still a Philistine vassal. After the tragic death of Esh-baal, Saul's son (2 Sam. iv), the rest of the people accepted David as their ruler. The work which Saul had taken in hand was once again proceeded with, and this time the unity of the nation made it more hopeful: the Philistines were decisively de-

feated, and other nations subdued, mainly by the activities of Joab, David's fierce captain. The crowning achievement was the capture of Jerusalem, which gave to the nation a new centre and capital, and one moreover which was not connected by tradition with any particular tribe.

The closing years of the reign were clouded by domestic troubles which, in the end, led to civil war. Absalom, the spoilt favourite of David, tried to dethrone his father but perished in the attempt. These internal struggles went to shew that Israel was not yet a unity and that the tribe of Judah was regarded with dislike by the rest of the kingdom (cf. 2 Sam. xx, 1 f.).

To David succeeded Solomon after a conspiracy in the harem (1 Kings i). His reign was one of internal peace, the result of a rule that was strong and pitiless. David had been little more than a tribal chief living on terms of intimacy with his people; Solomon was an oriental despot removed far from them. The design of David to build a temple to Jehovah was carried out by his son as part of a lavish scheme of building which beautified the new capital. The Temple was at first little more than a magnificent private chapel,[1] but gradually the whole religious life of the nation began to turn to Jerusalem as the special seat of Jehovah. The local sanctuaries still continued to exist but with diminishing glory.

[1] The Temple must not be thought of as a kind of cathedral, it was little more than 100 ft. in length, not so large as many village churches in England.

Externally also the reign of Solomon was one of peace. But this peace was really deceptive since it came about through the decline of Assyria which left the small states of Palestine free to develope their own resources. Israel had certain commodities which were acceptable to her neighbours: such were the wheat, wine, honey, and oil, and balm which in later days Ezekiel mentions (xxvii, 17). Most of her trade went through the hands of the Phœnicians of Tyre, since the sea-coast was still occupied by the Philistines. In co-operation with the same people Solomon established a fleet based on the port of Ezion-geber on the Red Sea. By this means trade was opened up with Ophir (perhaps the east coast of Africa or even India) from whence came gold and silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks (1 Kings ix, 26 ff., x, 22).

But this time of peace was of benefit to the Syrians, who were later to become Israel's most dangerous enemies. They had not yet, however, become important, and to the men of Solomon's day, if they thought upon such matters, it might have seemed that the foundations of a new empire were being laid. But a narrow strip of territory like Palestine could never have supported such a structure: and in any case the expected expansion never took place, for on the death of Solomon the kingdom was split in two by the rebellion of the northern tribes. None the less men looked back from the gloom and humiliation of later times to the reigns of David and Solomon as the golden age of Israel's history.

The burden of Solomon's magnificence had fallen heavily upon the nation, which had to supply free labour for his building schemes (1 Kings v, 13 ff.), as well as to keep the court duly provided (1 Kings iv). The men of Judah felt no doubt that they had some share in all this glory, but the tribes of the north were jealous and embittered. When Rehoboam succeeded his father, an effort was made to gain some relaxation. But the young king contemptuously dismissed the deputation, and the house of David lost for ever the allegiance of the greater part of the people (1 Kings xii). The movement which led to the schism had been foretold by a prophet who presumably was in sympathy with it (1 Kings xi, 26 ff.). But the new king of Israel, Jeroboam, fearing the attraction which Jerusalem might have for his subjects, tried to counteract it by making lavish gifts to the two ancient sanctuaries of Dan and Bethel which were situated within his own territories (1 Kings xii, 28 ff.). He thus created an ecclesiastical as well as a political breach, but the God worshipped by both parts of the people was still Jehovah.

The two kingdoms continued to exist side by side for a time. The kings of the house of David, secure in the loyalty of their fellow tribesmen, held the throne till the end; the succession, save for the short intrusion of Athaliah, being uninterrupted. Judah was protected from foreign attacks by the more powerful northern kingdom and there is little of significance to record in its history. The names of two kings only stand out with any prominence, Asa and his son

Jehoshaphat; the reign of each of them was marked by a quickened interest in religion (1 Kings xv, 9 ff., xxii, 43 ff.).

On the throne of Israel, however, a series of short-lived dynasties held precarious power, and we hear little about them but their misdeeds. A few great names are noticeable. Jeroboam, the first monarch, was seemingly a person of power and parts; Omri was sufficiently noteworthy to give his name to the land[1]: and Jehu was a fanatical follower of Jehovah whose methods were condemned by the conscience of a later age (see Hos. i, 4). Ahab was another Solomon intent on glorifying himself and his capital by lavish building schemes. He was a devout follower of Jehovah according to his lights, but, again like his predecessor, he was led astray by matrimonial alliances. If the prophets had had a hand in creating the schism between Judah and Israel, it is probable that they soon repented of their act. The kings of Israel cared little for the ideals for which the prophetic movement stood, and the breach between them and the prophets soon widened (1 Kings xiv, 1 ff., xvi, 1–4). When Ahab, under the influence of Jezebel, allowed the worship of the Tyrian Baal to be propagated in Israel, the threat to the religion of Jehovah, as understood by the highest minds in the movement, was exceedingly serious. Perhaps the most ominous feature was that the greater part of the prophets, in their obsequious dependence on court favour, were apparently

[1] The Assyrians called Palestine the land of Humri.

willing to fall in with the king's wishes. At this juncture Elijah stepped forth as the champion of the traditional faith.

Elijah, in spite of some weaknesses, is one of the most impressive characters of the Old Testament, and even his failings make him more human. He came from the desert to defend the old pure faith which the nation had there adopted, and to turn their hearts from foreign cults and alien ideals. His character was simple and direct, and so were his methods, even to the point of ruthlessness. He saw one thing clearly, that Jehovah could not share the allegiance of the people with the god of another nation. It was no longer a question of the recognition of local Baalim, who, like patron saints or household gods, could occupy a position of subordination, but a real challenge to the supremacy of Jehovah. Like the earlier prophets he was a patriot and a fanatic, and in the end he was justified. Once Jezebel was dead no one cared very much about her or her god: but the memory of Elijah remained a treasured possession of the people, he was the prophet who was to reappear and restore all things (Mal. iv, 5 f.). His challenge to the nation on Mount Carmel (1 Kings xviii, 20 ff.) had gone home. But the amazing scene on Mount Carmel was not, so far as the future was concerned, the most significant event in the life of Elijah: that must be sought at Horeb whither the prophet in the depression of reaction had fled. At Horeb Jehovah had appeared to the men of old in thunder and flame, now He was to reveal Himself, and that to a prophet who has been described as

'pre-eminently the prophet of Yahweh manifested by fire',[1] as a still small voice (1 Kings xix, 8–12).

In their struggle against Ahab the prophets were helped by the growing resentment of the people against the rapacity of the royal house: this, I think, is a fair inference from the prominence which the writer of Kings gives to the story of Naboth and his vineyard (1 Kings xxi; 2 Kings ix, 26).

Elijah disappeared from among men as suddenly as he had come, but he left behind him a disciple who was at once recognized as his natural successor (2 Kings ii). Elisha presents us with an absolute contrast so far as method and training are concerned. He was a man of the court, not of the desert; he did not startle his fellows by sudden dramatic comings and goings, but lived continually among them; after the extinction of Baal worship he worked with the king and not against him, a task perhaps at least as difficult.[2] But his methods, if not so drastic as those of Elijah, were not less thorough. As a prophet he suffers from being overshadowed by his master, and stories told of the one seem, with but slight adaptation, to have been applied to the other.[3] By comparison he is a little vague and shadowy, but on the whole he stands nearer to the type of prophet who was to follow than did Elijah.

[1] Foakes Jackson, in *Peake's Commentary*, p. 303.

[2] 'Elijah is the Prophet in opposition: Elisha has the less heroic, if really more difficult, part of the Prophet whose side is in office.' Burkitt, in *The New Commentary*, p. 421.

[3] Cf. 1 Kings xvii, 8–24 and 2 Kings iv, 1–7, 18–37.

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE LATER PROPHETS

We come now to the prophets who are known to us, not merely by the reports of others, but by their own utterances. We must not, however, regard the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the rest as having actually been written by the prophet whose name they bear. The prophets were primarily preachers: that their teaching was preserved in writing was a secondary thing. Jeremiah, perhaps the greatest of all the prophets, had been delivering his message for many years before he began to write it down (Jer. xxxvi, 1 f.). The book ascribed to each prophet is to be regarded, to use modern terms, as a biography and not an autobiography. It consists of reports of his sermons together with reminiscences of his disciples: in the case of Jeremiah the whole seems to have been collected and edited by his faithful secretary, Baruch.

The existence of these biographies, although in most cases they are only slight, makes the picture of the later prophets more vivid than that of the former. It is true that the early period gives us the unique figure of Balaam, a Gentile, yet one whom Jehovah could use; and that in Judges, Samuel, and Kings, prophets appear from time to time; but we know little about them; even Nathan, who

dealt so faithfully with David, is but a shadowy figure. It is remarkable that most of the prophets before the fall of Samaria come from North Israel or are mainly concerned with its fortunes. Obvious examples are Elijah and Elisha, and it should not be forgotten that Amos, a native of Judah, delivered his message to Israel. So long as the northern kingdom lasted its importance was so much greater than that of Judah that the prophets felt that to declare the will of Jehovah to Israel was the really urgent task.

But the prophets were not always at one in the matter of the will of Jehovah, there was sometimes a sharp division between them: we remember the case of Micaiah and Zedekiah (2 Kings xxii) and that of Jeremiah and Hananiah (Jer. xxviii). On each occasion we find men, both claiming to be the spokesmen of Jehovah, on opposite sides. What test was to shew which was the true prophet and which the false? Jeremiah himself has given a number of characteristics of genuine prophecy: but to a modern mind they are hardly satisfactory as tests. In the first place the genuine utterance burns like fire or is like 'a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces' (xxiii, 29). But the energy and confidence of the false prophets must have seemed to be just as great to the onlooker as that of the true. The second test was that of fulfilment (xxviii, 9: cf. Deut. xvii, 21 f.). This test requires the lapse of time and by it some of the greatest of the prophets, if not all, would stand condemned, since few of them had all their forecasts fulfilled. The older school of critics tried to shift the emphasis from foretelling

to forthtelling, but there can be but little doubt that the prophets did definitely regard prediction as among the most important of their functions (cf. Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion*, pp. 4 ff.). The third test is really an argument in a circle, since it merely states that those in agreement with Jeremiah were true prophets and had stood in the council of Jehovah, those who opposed him were false. It should be noticed that there is no appeal to the working of miracles, and that in the books of the prophets themselves records of miracles are almost unknown (contrast 2 Kings).[1]

The prophets were careful to have no dealings with anything that seemed like magic. By some of them dreams were regarded as a means by which the divine will was made known (cf. Joel ii, 28; also Job xxxiii, 14 ff. and Daniel), but to others dreams were but deceptive (Jer. xxiii, 25 f.; Ecclus. xxxiv, 1). In their enthusiastic passion to deliver the message which had come to them the prophets were at times unbalanced: they would see some great truth and forget the balance of truth as a whole. A number of scholars of the present day think that their visions came normally to them when they were in a state of ecstasy, and that they uttered short oracular sayings which were afterwards collected and arranged by their followers. The earlier prophets, as we saw above, were certainly subject

[1] The accounts of miracles in the Old Testament should not be taken too literally; the writers, as Gwatkin said, are 'more anxious to impress on us that an action was divine in origin than that it was miraculous in form'. *The Knowledge of God*, II, 20.

to sudden ecstatic fits, but it is doubtful whether men like Isaiah and Jeremiah received their messages when in such a condition. Cheyne used to teach that the vision which came to Isaiah in the Temple was intended to set before him the ideal of prophecy as a life-work, and thus to correct the primitive view which made it depend on these isolated moments of ecstasy.

The rise of the new type of prophet came about just as the northern kingdom was entering upon the final period of its existence. It began brilliantly: Syria, crippled by her struggles with Assyria, had ceased to be dangerous; Assyria herself, through troubles near at home, no longer interfered in Palestine. Thus a chance was given to Jeroboam II to revive the glories of the Davidic empire. A time of transient prosperity ensued; but it was prosperity divorced from righteousness; and Amos, and after him Hosea, denounced the avarice and cruelty of the 'profiteers' of the day (Am. ii, 6 ff., vi, 1–7; Hos. x, 12 f., xii, 7 f.). Jeroboam died in 741 and the nation only survived for another twenty years. During that time a number of kings occupied the perilous throne: but of stability of rule or continuity of policy there was none, save that a foolish reliance upon Egypt led Israel to ally herself with other Palestinian states in vain attempts to check the reviving power of Assyria. Samaria finally fell to Sargon in 722 B.C. Judah, with a real statesman like Isaiah to guide her, was able to avoid the fate of Israel.

But the fall of Samaria was a severe blow to her weaker

sister. So long as the northern kingdom retained its power, it formed a protection against the attacks of other nations; now Judah lay open to their full force. The land to the north was not of course entirely desolate. Sargon had exiled some 27,000 of the Israelites, but that was but a small proportion of the population, and in their place he had brought in other peoples with whom the inhabitants no doubt were quickly amalgamated (2 Kings xvii, 24).

The northern kingdom thus went down in a welter of violence and bloodshed: Judah alone remained as the people of Jehovah. But the lesson of Israel's fate was lost upon its people, and they insisted on plunging into politics just as if Assyria had never captured Samaria. As a result Sennacherib destroyed all the Judean fortresses except Jerusalem itself. The sufferings of the countryside have been described with vivid force by Isaiah's rustic contemporary, Micah. His opinion of Jerusalem (Mic. iii, 12) was by no means that of the statesman-prophet who had successfully foretold its preservation. Hezekiah was then king, a loyal servant of Jehovah, and a friend to the prophetic party. Under his son, Manasseh, the prophetic or puritan party had to endure much opposition and hardship, but the long reign came to an end at last and, after the brief interlude of Amon, Josiah, then only a child of eight, came to the throne.

In the eighteenth year of his reign, whilst repairs were being carried on in the Temple, an anonymous law-book

was discovered (2 Kings xxii, 3 ff.),[1] and in obedience to its precepts Josiah began at once a vigorous attempt to cleanse the kingdom from every taint of idolatry. In order to further this aim he endeavoured to centralize all worship at Jerusalem and to disestablish the local sanctuaries: an exceedingly drastic step to which a modern parallel would be the closing of all parish churches and the restriction of worship to the cathedral in each diocese.

In carrying out these reforms Josiah seems not to have sought the advice or the co-operation of Jeremiah, and it is significant that in his commendation of Josiah, the prophet makes no mention of his zeal as a reformer (Jer. xxii, 15 f.). But the end of the reforms and of Josiah himself came all too quickly. In 612 Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, fell before the Medes and Babylonians. Necho of Egypt, who was the ally of Assyria, marched to her help and on the way he was opposed with romantic hardihood by Josiah.[2] The feeble barrier was easily swept

[1] This book is regarded by most critics as containing the kernel of the present book of Deuteronomy (i.e. xii–xxvi). It is probable that the 'discovery' was pre-arranged, and that Hilkiah was in sympathy with the prophetic party whose views it advocated. In 2 Chron. xxxiv, 3, 8 ff., the reformation is placed *before* the discovery of the book, and is said to have been begun in the *twelfth* year of Josiah's reign.

[2] In 2 Kings xxiii, 29, the Pharaoh is said to have gone up against the king of Assyria, but this is evidently a mistake. The discovery by C. J. Gadd of a new Babylonian tablet has thrown fresh light on the events of this era. It shews that Nineveh actually fell in 612 B.C., not in 606 the accepted date, but that an attempt was made to prolong the Assyrian kingdom in North

away and Josiah perished: thus once again fanaticism had led to speedy doom. A strong light is thrown upon the candour of the Old Testament writers by the fact that they have allowed the promise to Josiah of a peaceful death (2 Kings xxii, 20) to remain although it was so grievously disappointed.

The important question of the mastery of Syria was now to be settled. The battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C. saw the overwhelming defeat of Necho by Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon: destiny had spoken, and for centuries to come the Jews and their neighbours were to be under Mesopotamian rule.

For a time Judah struggled to obtain her freedom with the aid of Egypt which, if defeated, was not above stirring up her smaller neighbours to resist the flood of Babylonian advance. The end, however, was inevitable. In 597 Jerusalem fell into the hands of her besiegers and the best of her citizens, including the prophet Ezekiel, were taken into captivity. Jeremiah had striven in vain to save the nation from its folly: and even after the first capture his task was not over. Again Judah refused to learn her lesson: a second revolt broke out, a second siege followed, and further leading away into captivity (2 Kings xxiv–xxv). Jeremiah himself was allowed to remain behind in Palestine but fresh troubles led to his being carried into Egypt

Syria. See C. J. Gadd, *The Fall of Nineveh*. It is worth noting that Josephus (*Antiquities*, x, v, 1) had already corrected the statement of the Old Testament.

by a band of fugitives (Jer. xl–xliii) and there, so legend has it, he died at the hands of his countrymen.

That, very briefly, is the background against which the later prophets lived out their fateful lives. They brought to the hearts and minds of the best of their people that ever-growing revelation of Jehovah which is the priceless contribution of the Hebrew race to the welfare of mankind. An old legend tells us that the Apostles' Creed was composed by each of the apostles providing a clause: perhaps it might be said, and certainly with greater truth, that each of the prophets added some fresh thought to the faith of Israel.

Amos taught men that because Jehovah is righteous He will judge not only the nations, but His own people as well. Hosea told of the love of Jehovah, a love like that of a man for his wife, and the need for faithfulness in Israel. Isaiah realized that Jehovah desired righteousness more than ritual and gave to the idea of the divine holiness a new moral content. He taught the beginnings of a philosophy of history and saw that though the nation might perish a remnant would survive. Micah also emphasized the divine demand for justice rather than formal worship and, like Isaiah, pleaded for social righteousness. Zephaniah added but little to the course of revelation, but he elaborated the idea of the Day of Jehovah and extended judgement to all, even to the brute creation (i, 2 f.). Nahum, in his exultation over the fall of Nineveh and the sufferings of its people, strikes that narrowly patriotic note which seems to

place him with the prophets whom Jeremiah denounced. Habakkuk is important as bringing up the problem of evil (i, 12 f.) and the apparent use by Jehovah of unrighteous instruments. Jeremiah takes up Isaiah's teaching of the inviolability of Zion and shews that it cannot be pleaded by a wicked nation. He emphasizes the personal side of religion, significant teaching for a people who were shortly to be taken away from their land and temple. Ezekiel developes the personal aspect of religion, not on the devotional side, but as carrying with it responsibility for one's own deeds. He was a link between the prophetic type of religion and that priestly type which was to develope after the exile. The anonymous prophets whose writings have been added to Isaiah call upon Israel to be a light to lighten the Gentiles.

The teaching of the prophets thus formed a continual developement of the idea of God, and of man's response to the divine revelation. But the prophets themselves, although they might be conscious that they were in some degree pioneers, based their appeal on the past. Many of them regarded the wilderness period as the golden age of the race (Am. ii, 10, v, 25; Hos. ii, 16 f.). That men of the desert like Elijah or Amos should think thus is not surprising, but the idea also occurs in the teaching of a villager like Jeremiah (ii, 2 f.). On the other hand, to Ezekiel, as to some of the writers of the Pentateuch, the wilderness was the scene of murmuring and constant unfaithfulness (Ezek. ii, 3, xx, 8 ff.).

The majority of the prophets thus felt that they stood for Jehovah and the religion of the wilderness against unworthy innovations. This was especially true of their attitude towards sacrifices. They held that in the wilderness there had been no sacrifice[1] (Am. v, 25; Jer. vii, 22) and that Jehovah even in their day was demanding not offerings but justice and mercy and humility (Mic. vi, 6–8; Hos. vi, 6; Is. i, 11 ff.; Jer. vii, 22 f.). It is of course quite possible to argue that in their anxiety to emphasize moral values the prophets unduly minimized the place of sacrifice, both in their own and in previous ages, or that like the writer who added the last verse to Ps. li they felt that sacrifices from blameless hearts would be acceptable. On the other hand, as Skinner points out, 'They never demand a purified ritual, but always and exclusively the fulfilment of the ethical commands of Yahweh'.[2]

What, it may be asked, was their positive teaching? If it had to be put into a single sentence I should say that it was the belief in Jehovah as a living God. This is, and always has been, man's deepest need; and the danger is that creeds and dogmas may be made a substitute for such knowledge.[3]

[1] Burkitt suggests that this may have been because they were not yet in Jehovah's land (cf. Josh. v, 2–5). In any case the prophets could have had no knowledge of the ideal though entirely imaginary picture of worship in the wilderness which is presented by P.

[2] *Prophecy and Religion*, p. 181.

[3] Cf. F. D. Maurice: 'We have been dosing our people with religion, when what they want is not this but the living God'. Maurice was the friend and inspirer of Charles Kingsley.

It was through their unflinching faith in Jehovah as a GOD who did things that the prophets were able to rise above the limited ideas of their contemporaries. In the earlier stages it is true that Jehovah was held to be but the GOD of their own race, and it is by no means clear when this stage was left behind. But by the time of the written prophets the conception of Him as the GOD of the universe was held by the highest minds.

From this doctrine it followed that Jehovah was the creator and sustainer of all things (Jer. xxvii, 5). He it was who had made man and He still cared for him, bringing the Syrians from Kir as well as Israel from Egypt (Am. ix, 7). Jehovah is also high and lifted up (Is. vi, 1), holy in a fuller sense than that of mere separation. He is just and righteous and demands similar qualities in His worshippers.

Thus they thought of GOD. Man in his turn must respond to the divine revelation by the performance of certain duties. These duties concern both GOD Himself and man's own fellows. Before, however, going on to consider man's duties, we have to realize that the prophets held that he was free to choose whether he would obey or not (Jer. ii, 19). It was true that until the teaching of Jeremiah (xxxi, 29 f.) and Ezekiel (xviii) man thought that he might be punished for the sins of his fathers, but even this did not free him from responsibility and the denunciations of the prophets.

Man's duty towards GOD included perfect obedience to His commands: this ranked above sacrifice as we have already seen. None the less, worship was expected from

man, and worship offered to other gods would surely be punished.

Man's duty to his neighbour is closely bound up with his duty towards GOD. The later prophets would have agreed with St John (1 Jo. iv, 20) that a man who fails to love his neighbour whom he has seen is a liar if he says he loves GOD whom he has not seen. In fact a man's relations with his neighbour provide, in their eyes, the best opportunity of serving Jehovah: hence the emphasis upon social righteousness and the denunciation of oppression and injustice. These denunciations were often delivered when all seemed to be going well, when in the eyes of the people the prosperity of the country signified Jehovah's approval of their conduct. Thus the prophets condemned the greed and avarice of the great landlords as well as the senseless luxury of their womenfolk (Is. iii). They did so because they knew that they spoke in Jehovah's name. So also they interfered in international politics and for the same reason.

The crown of the whole prophetic teaching is the doctrine of the New Covenant. This doctrine is set forth in a few verses of Jeremiah (xxxii, 32 ff.) which, in spite of their brevity, contain matter of infinite value. As we have already seen, religion for the Semite was a relation not so much between the individual and his god as between the tribe and the god. Each man was a member of a particular tribe and worshipped its god. Even when the idea of the uniqueness of Jehovah had been grasped, men did not rise at once to the idea of a relation between Him and His

worshippers which was independent of nationality. To Jeremiah it was given to rise to the height of this wonderful conception, a conception which has now become a commonplace of our thinking, if not of our practice. To his contemporaries it seemed more like a paradox, and indeed for centuries men paid but little heed to the idea. The religion of the Jews after the Exile developed on very different lines. Indeed it was not until our Lord appeared that the full significance of this conception was recognized.

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CHAPTER SIX

THE RISE OF JUDAISM

JERUSALEM had fallen before the power of Babylon in 586 B.C. A period of anarchy followed in which the land became partially desolate. Later writers tended to exaggerate the actual desolation, applying to the whole countryside words which had originally been spoken only of the cities, and in particular of Jerusalem and the Temple (Zech. i, 12, vii, 5 : cf. 2 Chron. xxxvi, 21). Then in 538 Babylon in turn fell, practically without resistance, to part of the army of Cyrus. This event meant the end of Semitic rule in the Near East and the beginnings of the Persian Empire, one of the greatest achievements of the ancient world.[1]

Cyrus was a statesman and realized that a wise ruler will respect and formally recognize the religious traditions of

[1] 'The Persian empire was created within the space of a single generation by a series of conquests that followed one another with a rapidity scarcely equalled except by Alexander, and by the Arabs in the first generation after the death of Mohammed.... Confirmed and rounded off by Darius, this empire was maintained, by the same family that created it, for two centuries undivided and unbroken, whereas Alexander's dominions were separated from his family and divided immediately after his death, and within the first century and a half of Islam great dynastic changes occurred and the unity of Arabian rule was broken.' *Camb. Anc. Hist.* IV, 2.

conquered peoples. Accordingly, on the one hand, he made use of the Oracles of the Greeks, and, on the other, announced himself as a worshipper of Bel, Marduk, and Nebo, to whose help he ascribed his victory over Babylon. Toleration was to be the policy of his government, and the various gods and peoples who had been removed from their lands by the Babylonians were allowed to return. Amongst others who took advantage of this permission were the Jews, though not in any great numbers.

The Jews in exile were not treated as captives, and following the advice of Jeremiah (xxvii, 4–8) they had settled down and made permanent homes. Zion was still a religious centre to which they lifted up their hearts: but the land of Judah was no paradise, even for a farmer, whilst for a trader it was simply impossible. To go back meant breaking up their homes, losing their trade, a long and dangerous journey, and at the end—the barren hillsides of Judea. After years of exile, Zion was only a tradition, and though there might be some who preferred Jerusalem 'above every joy' (Ps. cxxxvii, 6) the number of them was inconsiderable. The anonymous prophet of the Exile had already realized that the great enemy in the way of the realization of his dreams of restoration was not alien compulsion, but Jewish indifference and trust in idols (Is. xlvi, 8 ff., xlviii, 1 ff.).

When the Babylonian armies finally retired from Palestine, the people who had fled away and hidden themselves would slowly return. So sacred a spot as Jerusalem would

not long remain unoccupied, and though the Temple lay in ruins it was still a notable sanctuary (Jer. xli, 4 ff.). The first authentic knowledge that we have of conditions is contained in Haggai and Zechariah. These books give us the picture of a community living quietly and even comfortably (Hag. i, 4) in its own land. The people are apparently not returned exiles, though they look forward to the coming back of their dispersed brethren (Zech. ii, 10 ff., viii, 7). By both the prophets they are addressed as 'the people of the land' (Hag. ii, 4; Zech. vii, 5) or the 'remnant' (Hag. i, 12, 14, ii, 2; Zech. viii, 6, 11 f.). Some scholars therefore conclude, in the words of one of them, that 'The term "Revival" describes the real facts better than either "Restoration" or "Return"'.[1]

In any case the progress of events in Judah is difficult to follow. The call to re-build the Temple was sounded in Oct. 520. A little later Zechariah comes upon the scene and the foundations are actually laid. It is possible that at this juncture an attempt was made to restore an independent kingdom, with Zerubbabel as its king. Messianic language was used of him (e.g. he is called the Branch in Zech. iii, 8, vi, 12 f.: cf. Jer. xxiii, 5, xxxiii, 15), and in his person, when the kingdoms have been subdued by the power of Jehovah, the curse on the dethroned Coniah (Jer. xxii, 24) was to be reversed (Hag. ii, 23). The whole episode is very mysterious as Zerubbabel suddenly disappears from the scene, and we hear no more about him. Possibly he was

[1] C. F. Kent, *Hist. of the Jewish People*, p. 134. (Scribners.)

removed by Tattenai, the Persian satrap of Transpotamia (in which Palestine was included), who visited Jerusalem about this time (Ezra v, 8). The Temple was completed about 516 B.C., and then there is silence until the coming of Nehemiah in 445.[1]

To Nehemiah and the strict Babylonian Jews the people of the land were living a life quite unworthy of the followers of Jehovah. They had contracted alliances with foreign wives and they allowed foreigners to 'defile' the land by their presence. The people of the north, the Samaritans, especially aroused Nehemiah's wrath. The Samaritans, although no doubt they included among them people of mixed descent, were really a sect of orthodox Jews who differed from their fellows over the site of the sanctuary; they upheld the rights of the ancient Shechem, where the patriarchs had worshipped, against the newer Jerusalem. Under the Persians Samaria was the seat of the Government, and possibly a feeling of rivalry was aroused by this. The final breach came about, so far as we can see, largely as the result of a personal quarrel: but this was the occasion rather than the cause of the schism.

It is interesting to recall that the fifth century B.C., which

[1] If Ezra is a historic person, which I am inclined to doubt, his visit must be placed in 397. It should be noted that Nehemiah ignores him and acts as if he were sole leader. In Ecclus. xlix, 11 ff. and 2 Macc. i, 18 ff., ii, 13, the restoration of the Temple and its services is attributed to Nehemiah alone. It is possible that Ezra was brought in by the Priestly school in order to make the restoration the work of a priest and not of a layman.

saw the visit of Nehemiah to Jerusalem, was the great age of Athens; that Nehemiah and Pericles were contemporaries; and that whilst the Jews were re-building Jerusalem, the Greeks were adorning Athens. The struggle of the Greeks with Persia must have been known even in the narrow Judaic circles of Palestine, but no trace is found of it in existing Hebrew literature.

The period immediately after the Exile was one of crisis and from it emerged what we know as Judaism. There were two main problems to be solved: (*a*) Was Judah to be a nation or a church? (*b*) Was Judah to take up the task of the Servant of Jehovah (Is. xlii, 1–7, xlix, 1–12, l, 4–9, lii, 13-liii) and be 'a light to lighten the Gentiles' or was it to be narrow and exclusive?

The first of these problems was decided by the fact that very few of the exiled Jews thought it worth their while to return to the home of their fathers: Babylon and a wider world offered them a more comfortable home and an infinitely greater scope for their genius for trade, perhaps then first manifesting itself on a large scale. It is true that in the pre-exilic days there had been trading in Palestine and perhaps the instinct went back to their Canaanite ancestors.[1] The glories of the age of David and Solomon were forgotten or spiritualized and, instead of endeavouring to revive an extensive empire, the Jews gave their energies to establishing an exclusive church. As we saw

[1] Canaanite is an equivalent for merchant: see Zeph. i, 11; Prov. xxxi, 24 (Hebrew).

above, it is possible that some of them in the age of Haggai and Zechariah cherished political ambitions, but, if so, their disappointment made others realize the futility of such hopes.

The second problem was more difficult, but gradually the decision was made in favour of separation from other peoples. Circumstances seemed to force the Jewish leaders along a path which could only end there; the danger of absorption by the heathen was a very real one, and how were they, in their weakness, to avoid it except by shutting themselves off from all avoidable contact with those around them? To take the line which they did may seem to have been a confession of want of power; it was also a confession of want of faith, a real loss of spiritual initiative. L. E. Browne in his interesting volume, *Early Judaism*, suggests that the rejection of our Lord was virtually made in this period, because the principles, both religious and political, which made that tragedy inevitable, then gained the upper hand.[1] On the opposite side of the account must be placed the splendid stand which the Jews made for their God in the age of the Maccabees, a stand which would not have been possible but for their separation from heathenism (see Chapter VII). Not all the Jews, however, adopted the position of the majority, and in the beautiful allegory of Jonah,

[1] Harnack, *Mission and Expansion of Christianity* (Williams and Norgate), and I. and R. Levy, *Deuteronomy to Isaiah*, pp. 38–77 (Oxford) do not consider that the Jews neglected their missionary vocation.

in which a Hebrew prophet is made to care for Gentiles, we have an anticipation of the spirit of Christianity itself:—the sign of Jonah (Lk. xi, 29 f.) which our Lord took up.

Let us now consider the lesser characteristics of this period of the developement of Israel's faith. The most obvious characteristic is the greatly increased importance of institutions. This may have been due in part to contact with the elaborate Babylonian religious organization with its great temples and powerful priesthood. In any event the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem was fraught with much consequence, since it gave to Judaism a centre and also made possible the revival of the sacrificial system. The older prophets had thought but little of institutions and organizations: a different attitude marks their successors after the Exile. Haggai, for example, by comparison with Micah, seems taken up with material things. We must, however, remember that he was dealing with a different set of problems. Malachi, too, is very material and makes the payment of tithes to the priesthood the great test of religion (iii, 10). From the point of view of the priests the security of their endowments was of the greatest importance, and no doubt Malachi reflects their point of view. But it would have been interesting to have heard Jeremiah on the whole question.

Amongst the exiles, on this and other questions, a much more liberal feeling prevailed. They had found that Jehovah was no mere local God, that He could be worshipped 'by the waters of Babylon' just as readily as on the

hills of Zion. But they clung also to certain observances which distinguished them from their neighbours. Fresh importance came to be attached to the sign of circumcision (an importance which is well maintained in New Testament times); the Sabbath, too, must be observed, as a sign of loyalty to Jehovah, especially by those who cannot join in the great feasts. It was during the Exile no doubt that the first experiments were made which led up to the regularly organized system of the synagogue.[1] The worship of the synagogue in turn probably made popular the idea of a set liturgy and regular readings: all this was a preparation for the ecclesiastical developements of the Christian Church.

Among the exiles, too, the developement of personal religion must have been hastened. Private prayer begins to be regarded with fresh importance, and there is the desire for the pouring out, even upon the slave and the handmaid, of the spirit of Jehovah. The individual approach to God, although apt to be forgotten in the elaborately organized Temple services, is being cultivated by the pious.

Both among the exiles and in Palestine the age was one of reflexion rather than of action. Political ambitions had been put aside for the time and under the shelter of a strong though alien government they could live in security. They turned therefore to a study of their own past which they

[1] During the Exile sacrifice was impossible since it could be offered only in Jerusalem. In its place gatherings for prayer and for the reading of sacred books would naturally take place. In course of time these gatherings would be organized in every Jewish community, even in Palestine itself.

now saw through a golden haze. They read back into that past ideas and institutions which had actually been devised by their own near predecessors, and in collecting and editing the traditions, knowingly or otherwise, made them serve their own conceptions of what was fitting.

The loss of political power meant that kings were to be displaced by priests; that Judah was to become a community, such as was common in the Persian Empire, grouped round a temple and ruled by a priestly caste. The Jewish priesthood was, in its final form, an exceedingly elaborate organization, with various grades of priests, culminating in the high priest himself, a person not only of great dignity but of considerable power.

The growth of priestly power was accompanied by a decay of prophecy. In the story of the reading of the law by Ezra no prophet is brought in to declare the will of Jehovah; the scribe, with the inspired book in his hand, is enough for all ordinary requirements and the inspired man gradually vanishes from Israel. The Priestly school tended more and more to make Judaism the religion of a book, and so to pave the way for Islam which is such a religion *par excellence*.

In considering the beliefs and point of view of Judaism we must be careful, however, not to generalize too freely. In ancient religions there was not that emphasis on identity of belief which has been the mark of the Christian Church since the fourth century. The same community which could include both Nehemiah and the author of the book

of Jonah could have had no narrow definition of orthodoxy. Judaism had in it many strands, and the real test was outward conformity to certain rites rather than the profession of inward beliefs. In later times the Sadducees did not question the right of the Pharisees, who held new fangled doctrines such as the Resurrection, to be orthodox Jews.

As in earlier periods, the beliefs of the people, so far as they have been preserved for us in the writings of their leaders, depended on their idea of Jehovah. One great effect the Exile had upon them was to make them see that He was no longer to be worshipped under the form of an idol, and that the gods of the heathen whose idols were all around them were nothingness and vanity (Is. xl, 18 ff.). That lesson was burnt into the nation, never to be forgotten. Jehovah was supreme and alone. This doctrine tended in time to make Him also remote and, as always follows when the transcendence of God is over-emphasized, the necessity of intermediaries became apparent. This necessity was met by the belief in angels. Furthermore, the growing belief in the separation of Jehovah from the world, and all that was sinful, led to the conviction that His people must also be separate, at any rate from their heathen neighbours, and gradually, as the real meaning of holiness came to be grasped, from sin and defilement of every kind. Each of these subjects demands a fuller treatment.

The increased emphasis upon God's power and glory led to a new idea of His methods of dealing with His

creatures. This was to be no longer direct (cf. the naïve 'coming down' of Gen. xi, 5) but by means of angels. Angels were simply the attendants on the divine sovereign, the messengers who made known His will or executed it. This idea was greatly developed in the two centuries immediately before the coming of our Lord, as can be seen in the book of Daniel. In the books outside the Old Testament, Tobit, Enoch, and Jubilees, angels are even more prominent, and indeed so numerous did they become that not only were names given to them, but they were arranged in ranks and orders.

One of the original purposes of sending angels upon earth was, it was supposed, that they might instruct and help mankind (Jubilees iv, 15); but unfortunately, as we are told in Gen. vi, 2, they fell before the beauty of the daughters of men, and in consequence were banished and imprisoned (Jub. v, 6, 10). Not all, however, thus suffered: some still were allowed to remain on earth to tempt men; the good angels did their best to counteract their efforts by revealing to Noah certain vegetable charms which were powerful against demons (Jub. x, 1–12).

In the Old Testament itself there is no idea of an actual spirit of evil (even the serpent of Gen. iii is not identified with the devil), it is GOD Himself who brings evil to pass (Am. iii, 6). Satan is one of the 'sons of God',[1] a member of the divine court (Job i, 6), whose business is to act as a kind of public accuser (cf. Zech. iii, 1). In this connexion

[1] That is 'angels', as in Gen. vi, 2; Job. xxxviii, 7.

the significant change made by the writer of 1 Chron. xxi, 1 should be noted. He states that it was Satan, not Jehovah Himself as in 2 Sam. xxiv, 1, who moved David to number Israel. The older writer had not yet realized that, however angry Jehovah might be, it was undignified for Him to entrap David into committing a compromising action in order to be able to punish Israel—this must be done by one of His officials. But the fact that Satan (or *the* Satan as it should be) was always against the Jews led them to regard him in the end as the actual spirit of evil. In Jubilees the chief of the angels is called Mastema, and given the title of Prince (cf. John xii, 31, etc.). He, like Satan, is saddled with the evil which is done in the world, and such things as the attack on Moses recorded in Ex. iv, 24 are said to be done by him and not by Jehovah.

The desire to magnify Jehovah led also to the introduction of angels as the means of revelation. The older prophets claimed to receive their messages from Jehovah Himself, the later prophets had to depend on messengers (Ezek. xliii, 6; Zech. i, 9; Dan. xi, 21; cf. Rev. i, 1). So far was the process carried that the Jews came to believe that even the covenant at Sinai was not made with Moses direct but through angels (Gal. iii, 19; Hebs. ii, 2).

The hardening process by which Judaism became a closed religion for one nation only, and that a nation which avoided every possible contact with the rest of mankind, began, as we have seen, in the days of Nehemiah. It was the logical conclusion to the belief that Israel, as the

peculiar possession of Jehovah, must be separate. Protests against such a doctrine seem to be found in the books of Jonah and of Ruth, but for the time it became predominant in Judah. Humanly speaking, it was this process which enabled Judaism to resist the attacks of those who would have brought it under Greek influences (see next chapter). There is always the danger that the indiscriminate admission of numbers of outsiders into a religion will result in its being unduly influenced by their ideas: this is probably what took place when Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire in the days of Constantine.

The later part of the post-exilic period saw the developement of interest in all kinds of problems which we name philosophical, both metaphysical and ethical. Such questions as the meaning of suffering and the forgiveness of sin came in for constant discussion. A consideration of them, as of the whole doctrine of the Future as it concerns the nation and the individual, must be left for later chapters.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

JUDAISM AND HELLENISM

UNTIL quite recently the two centuries immediately before the coming of our Lord were regarded as a kind of desert, and we spoke, habitually, of the 'gap' between Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament in our English Bible, and Matthew, the first of the New. In the past few years, however, much work has been done on the abundant literature of this period, some of which was already known to us in the Apocrypha. The result has been that our opinion of them has entirely changed, and so great an authority as Dr Charles even claims that these two centuries, hitherto regarded as of such small value, 'might be described as the most fruitful centuries in religious life and thought in the history of Israel'.[1] In this chapter we shall deal with the outward events of these centuries, and in the two which follow we shall discuss the various ideas which, taken over largely from a still earlier period, were being developed in them.

It was pointed out above that when the Greeks were in the age of their greatest glory the Jewish writers apparently knew nothing about them. They were merely a distant

[1] *Between the Old and New Testaments*, p. 115. (H.U.L.)

nation (Is. lxvi, 19) and one which was notorious for dealing in slaves (Joel iii, 6). It is strange that the Athenian expedition to Egypt (460–454 B.C.), an event the importance of which has been a little overshadowed by the Peloponnesian War, is never referred to, as it must have been the talk of the near East. Palestine and Egypt must then, as at all ages, have been closely in touch with one another. On the other hand, the Jews were too insignificant a people to call for special mention by Greek writers, though they are probably included among the Syrians mentioned by Herodotus as having learned the rite of circumcision from the Egyptians (ii, 104).

The two nations first came into close contact through the conquests of Alexander the Great. Alexander was no mere 'war lord', and his campaigns were intended, in part at any rate, to help forward the realization of a great and noble ideal, the abolition of racial boundaries and the transforming of mankind into a single world state, in which the culture of Greece should be the moulding influence.[1] Alexander was far in advance of his times, and his ideal scheme would probably have come to very little, even if he had lived long enough to complete the conquest of the Persian Empire, and then to organize it on new lines. But the ideal was not entirely forgotten, and the Seleucid kings (so called because descended from one of his generals, Seleucus) always regarded themselves as carrying on his work. It is interesting to notice the contrast between

[1] Cf. *Camb. Anc. Hist.* VI, 427 ff.

the real endeavour made by Alexander and the Hellenizers to adapt their culture to the needs of other peoples, and the exclusive spirit of the Jews who regarded their own religion as a peculiar treasure in which no foreigner must share. Alexander was preparing the way for a new world-religion.

Naturally enough, it was the Jews of the Dispersion who were the first to be affected by the spread of the new culture, especially the large numbers who had migrated to the city which Alexander had founded and named after himself. There in course of time they adopted the Greek language, and with it many Greek ideas. But even in Palestine itself the influence of Hellenism could be perceived: some of the towns adopted new Greek names, Ashdod became Azotus, and Acco, Ptolemais: whilst individuals began to despise their ancient Semitic names, and to turn them into the nearest Greek equivalent, thus Joshua became Jason.[1] The two cultures, Greek and Hebrew, were really antagonistic from the first. Hellenism was brilliant intellectually and artistically; it valued supremely beauty of form and of speech. But, in spite of a few great names, it was weak ethically. Moral decay was alarmingly frequent among alien peoples who adopted Greek culture, and the contempt with which the rude

[1] A parallel can be found at the time of the Renaissance when names were given a Greek, or more commonly a Latin, form: a well-known instance of the former change is Melanchthon whose real name was Schwartzerd.

though upright Romans regarded the conquered Greeks was in part justified.

On the death of Alexander, Palestine came under the power of Ptolemy who had seized Egypt as his share of the dismembered empire. Jerusalem itself was captured in 320 B.C., and, since the attack was made on the Sabbath, the pious defenders offered no resistance. The Egyptian overlordship lasted for more than a century, though it was constantly threatened by the Seleucid kings who held Syria as part of their wide dominions. Under Egyptian rule the Jews were on the whole well treated: Jerusalem continued to be, as under the Persians, the centre of a small community gathered round a temple and ruled by its high priest. In course of time the combination of secular rule and religious office proved, as so often, harmful to the latter, the high priests became worldly and ambitious, and subordinated the spiritual side of their office to the secular.

Egyptian rule came to an end in 198 B.C. when Antiochus the Great defeated Ptolemy V at Paneas near the sources of the Jordan. Thenceforward Palestine went with Syria as part of the Seleucid empire. Antiochus himself was killed twelve years later in an attempt to seize the treasures of the temple at Elymais, and his son, Seleucus IV, succeeded him. Seleucus had reigned for only ten years when he was poisoned by Heliodorus who usurped the throne. His tenure was, however, but a short one as the brother of the murdered king, Antiochus Epiphanes, immediately

avenged his death, and thus began his own fateful reign (176–164).

Antiochus Epiphanes is one of the most baffling characters in history, and to form any just or even clear impression of him is almost impossible. No doubt the various accounts which have been preserved are marked by prejudice. The author of Daniel, for example, calls him 'a contemptible person', which he certainly was not. Hence in part comes the difficulty of estimating him.

The actual outlines of his life are known. As a youth he had been sent to Rome as a hostage for the good behaviour of Antiochus the Great. There he had made a study of politics and had acquired a high regard for Roman efficiency. In later years it must be remembered that Antiochus not only Hellenized, he Romanized too, trying to remodel Antioch as an eastern Rome and to make it the centre of a vast empire. On leaving Rome he went to Athens where he was quite carried away by the effect of the famous city 'of the violet crown'. He took up with enthusiasm the task which his house, following in the steps of Alexander, had always attempted—the bringing of all men under the influence of Greek ideas. It was not merely Greek religion but Greek civilization that he wished to establish. By this time the first strong tide of Hellenism, which had flowed forth as a result of the conquests of Alexander, had begun to ebb and the East was, in its turn, influencing the West. Hence the passion with which he tried to carry out his plans. It is important to remember

this universal aspect of Antiochus's labours, for otherwise we may regard him as merely endeavouring to upset the religion of one small people, the Jews.

The aspect of Greek culture which appealed most to Antiochus was the outward, spectacular side. He loved pomp and ceremony, and was himself remarkable for the charm of his manners. But his culture was only superficial; inwardly he was cruel and lacking in real cultivation. But alongside this superficial side we find in him a determination which was never daunted by either danger or opposition. His plans may have been ideal and visionary, but in attempting to carry them out he shewed practical ability as well as persistence.

On his accession Antiochus deposed Onias III, the reigning high priest at Jerusalem, and appointed in his place Jason, Onias's own brother. Jason at once began to Hellenize Jerusalem. He established a gymnasium and made the young men of the aristocracy adopt Greek dress; even the priests were led astray by their leader 'and neglecting the sacrifices, they hastened to enjoy that which was unlawfully provided in the palaestra... making of no account the honours of their fathers, and thinking the glories of the Greeks best of all' (2 Macc. iv, 9 ff.). Jason even went so far as to send a contribution to the festival of Hercules; this, however, was too much for the messengers by whom he sent it and they quietly handed it over to be used in the equipment of galleys (2 Macc. iv, 18 ff.). But Jason, in spite of all his zeal, had to suffer the fate of his

predecessor and see himself supplanted by another. His successor Menelaus obtained his office by promising a higher rate of tribute, and he did not scruple to turn even the temple vessels into ready money for his own purposes. On the rumour of Antiochus's death during the Egyptian expedition of 170 B.C., Jason suddenly regained possession of Jerusalem, and a massacre of his opponents followed. He was sufficiently fortunate to escape before the return of the enraged Antiochus, leaving the inhabitants of the luckless city to pay for his misdeeds. Forgetting the traditional tolerance of his house, Antiochus gave them up to slaughter and to slavery, and then attempted to stamp out the worship of Jehovah in its entirety. The GOD of the Jews could not be treated like the gods of other nations and made to take His place in the great religious scheme which was to include all deities within Antiochus's dominions; conflict was inevitable since Jehovah would have 'no other gods in His presence'.

The attempt to suppress the worship of Jehovah led to a fierce outburst on the part of such Jews as had not been corrupted. The leaders were Mattathias, the priest of Modin and his five sons, who from the name given to Judas, the third of them, are often called the Maccabees. To follow out the struggle in its details is impossible here; it will suffice to say that a number of factors combined to help the heroic Jews in their rebellion. The full power of Syria could not be used against them, as war broke out with the Parthians; there were dynastic troubles in the

royal house, of which the Jewish leaders took full advantage; there were revolting generals; but above all, Rome in the background was ever scheming to weaken the Seleucid monarchy. No praise can be too high for the splendid achievements of Judas and his brothers, but the overwhelming might of the Syrian kings, could it have been concentrated against them, must in the end inevitably have crushed them.

The struggle of the Jews under the Maccabees has left us a priceless gift in the book of the Old Testament known as Daniel. Of the man Daniel we know nothing beyond the picture presented in the book. It is probable that the name comes from Ezek. xiii, 14, xxviii, 3, where it is used of a figure, presumably of pre-exilic times, remembered by the Jews in Babylon on account of his wisdom and righteousness. It is not necessary to enter into the arguments which have convinced critics that the book does not belong to the age of the Exile, but was actually produced amidst the contest which it professes to foretell. The fitness of the book to give endurance and courage to a people fighting for their faith is obvious on every page: it culminates in iii, 18, where the Three Children defy Nebuchadrezzar, and declare their determination to remain loyal to Jehovah even though He does not rescue them from the hands of their oppressor.

There are some who find difficulty in the idea that the people of God were thus sustained in their struggle by what is really nothing less than a work of fiction. Dr Gore,

in *The New Commentary* edited by him, has attempted to meet this difficulty, in the following words:

> We recall the fact that among many peoples moral courage—to stand faithfully to GOD against desperate odds—has been nourished largely on stories that are dramas or romances and not histories, on the courage of Antigone and the faithfulness of Cordelia and the faithfulness of Christian (in the *Pilgrim's Progress*) and the heroic devotion of Jeanie Deans. Why is it that all that is best in men and women has been so fortified by 'fiction'? Only because these stories were recognized as true to experience, as embodying in one ideal figure a multitude of such experiences (p. 546).

The success of the revolt restored to the Jews freedom of religious worship and an ever increasing measure of political liberty. But with the growth of power came the decay of ideals. Jonathan Maccabeus, having the actual power in his hands, usurped the office of high priest, although not of the family of Aaron. Thus, like Melchizedek (Gen. xiv, 18), he was priest and king. In the reign of his successor, Simon, the high priesthood was made hereditary in the Maccabean house. The next ruler, John Hyrcanus (135–105), on the strength of a vision which he claimed to have received in the Temple of a victory gained by his sons, was hailed as Prophet, Priest, and King.

The Maccabees had owed their success very largely to the support of the Puritan element in the nation. But the increasing worldliness of the Priest-kings now began definitely to alienate their most important friends. The growing sect of the Pharisees represented this party, and over against them was the aristocratic party of the Sadducees

which, after the quarrel between the Priest-kings and the Pharisees, became the official supporters of the former. These two sects, interesting to us on account of the part which they played in New Testament times, arose so gradually that it is not possible to trace out their actual origins. The members of the one party were sincerely devout and godly, but inclined to be narrowly exclusive, and, in consequence, critical and proud: the members of the other party were formal and worldly, the upholders of the powers that be. To the Sadducees belonged both the civil and military power: but behind their rivals were the majority of the scribes and the bulk of the common people.

The schism in the Jewish people, of which the two sects were the evidence though hardly the cause, hastened on the inevitable end—the loss of the last remnants of political freedom. In 66 B.C. Syria, in which Palestine was included, was declared a Roman province, and three years later Pompey, the Roman General, entered Jerusalem. The Temple was held against him but had to surrender, and on taking possession of it he actually went into the Holy of Holies, to the scandal of the Jews, but he did not seize the treasures. This happened in the consulship of Cicero. In 48 Pompey suffered defeat at the hands of Julius Caesar at Pharsalia, and was murdered soon afterwards as he attempted to land in Egypt. The Pharisees rejoiced over the terrible end of the man who had dared to enter the Temple, and in the Psalms of Solomon (ii, 30) gloated over the thought of his body lying on the sea-shore and 'borne

hither and thither by the billows with much insolence'. Caesar in his pursuit of Pompey came to Egypt, where he found himself in great difficulty, and no little danger, through a sudden rising which shut him up in the island of Pharos. In the efforts made to extricate him from his peril the Jews played a prominent part, under the leadership of a certain Idumæan (Edomite) chief, Aristobulus by name. As a reward for his help Aristobulus was given a place near the person of the Jewish high priest over whom he began at once to exercise great influence. His younger son, Herod, followed his father as the favourite of Rome, and, after some vicissitudes of fortune, was actually given the title of King of the Jews by the Roman senate. So the Jews lost their liberties, a tragic end to the noble efforts of the Maccabees. But no other end was really possible; the later Maccabees themselves, by their ambition and pride, had divided the nation, and so bitterly did the parties hate one another that party success was held more dear than national honour. Even in 63 B.C. one party told Pompey that rather than have the high priest subject to the king they would lose national independence (Josephus, *Antiq.* XIV, iii, 2.).

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CHAPTER EIGHT

FAITH AND REASON: SOME URGENT PROBLEMS

In our consideration of the Jewish people and their faith we have so far been limited almost entirely to the study of those books of the Old Testament which have a prophetic or historical character. It is true that in the previous chapter we left behind the Old Testament for the greater part and made use of Apocryphal books like 1 and 2 Maccabees, but that was for a record of the actual events, not for a discussion of their significance in the developement of ideas.

In the period after the Exile the Jews had the opportunity, since they no longer aspired after political power, of thinking out the problems which were raised by their history as a race, or their experience as individuals. The result was that during the whole of this long period they were continually engaged in trying to adjust their idea of God to the facts of life as they knew them. As part of this process must be included the collecting and editing of national records, and their interpretation in accordance with the changed opinions of the age. This inevitably meant that they had to modify their views of earlier times.

They found that this process reached no definite end (in fact it would be true to say that it is still being continued), as one problem was solved another was revealed. But it is only thus that any progress, in either science or philosophy, can be made. The reward of true discovery is fresh opportunity for advance.

The attempts to meet the problems which beset them as thinking men were not hampered by any concern for orthodoxy. As Robertson Smith has pointed out, ancient religions had for the most part no creeds, but consisted entirely of institutions and practices. Dogma was absent and its place taken by mythology, that is, the belief that certain rites were established by the command or the example of some god. Men might hold this explanation or that of the rite, but so long as they conformed to it there was no disloyalty. The Jews were not quite in such a primitive condition; they had but few articles in their creed, or perhaps one, that Jehovah was the only god to be worshipped by Israel. Apart from this there was entire freedom for speculation, and the Jewish thinkers used their freedom to the full, even in regard to such questions as the existence of spirits, the resurrection of the body, and the coming of a Messiah: to all of which questions orthodox Jews gave different answers. In a book like Tobit there is even found a combination of admirably 'orthodox' piety with a childish belief in magic arts.

The problems which they tackled were partly metaphysical (i.e. dealing with the unseen world) and partly

ethical (i.e. dealing with man's life and conduct in this present, visible world). A moment's reflexion, however, will shew us that for people like the Jews, whose every act was done in an atmosphere of religion, the two sets of problems must have considerably overlapped. A modern philosopher may discuss moral problems from a purely human point of view; such a discussion would have been inconceivable to an ancient Israelite.

In considering ethical and moral questions it is, of course, the abnormal and unusual which receives most attention. The quiet, law-abiding member of the community is taken for granted, as is the faithful wife and the upright father. Hence we must not be surprised if we find in books like Proverbs or Ecclesiasticus the constant mention of faithlessness to the marriage vow: these things were the problem. It is true that there must have been a good deal of this kind of conduct going on, as well as open robbery and the more subtle form of thieving which is the art of the ungodly merchant, but these books no more give a complete picture of the state of society than does our own daily press of conditions to-day.

The literature in which these problems were discussed is often called the 'Wisdom' literature. By wisdom, however, the ancient Hebrew did not mean exactly what we mean by it; it was something more than 'sound learning', though that was an important element; it had a moral element as well, and men could say that 'the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God' (cf. Prov. ix, 10; Job xxviii, 28).

Its supreme value is set forth in a noble passage from the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs:

> Get wisdom in the fear of God with diligence.
> For though there be a leading into captivity,
> And cities and lands be destroyed,
> And gold and silver and every possession perish,
> The wisdom of the wise can nought take away,
> Save the blindness of ungodliness or the callousness of sin.
> Even among his enemies shall wisdom be a glory to him,
> And in a strange country a fatherland.
>
> *Test. Levi* xiii, 7 f.

Included among this literature were not a few poems: the Psalms themselves, it must not be forgotten, were greatly concerned with moral problems, such as the prosperity of the wicked (see p. 99 below). It will be well at this point to turn aside for a moment to consider the Psalter a little more fully.

The Psalms have been called the 'Hymns, Ancient and Modern' of the Jewish Church. This is an apt title, for it brings out the fact that they come from different ages and different writers. The Psalter, as we have it, is divided into five books, ending at Ps. xli, lxxii, lxxxix, cvi, and cl respectively. It might seem that these five books represent a single collection which was afterwards split up: but the evidence we possess makes it almost certain that, on the contrary, different smaller collections have been amalgamated: for instance, the same Psalm is found over again in a different book (e.g. xiv=liii, xl, 13–17=lxx) and, most striking of all, in certain books the name Jehovah is

used almost to the exclusion of God (e.g. Book I), whilst in others the reverse is the case (e.g. Book II).

In popular speech we attribute the Psalter to David. This attribution is not accepted by modern scholars, and indeed it is not the belief of the editors who prefixed the titles to the Psalms when they added them to their collections: some Psalms are stated to be by other poets (e.g. many are attributed to Asaph, xc to Moses, lxxii to Solomon).[1] It is probable that David wrote some Psalms (cf. 2 Sam. i, 19 ff.), though to Amos he was known, apparently unfavourably, as an inventor of musical instruments, and also possibly as the composer of 'idle songs' (vi, 5). The tradition that he was in the habit of writing many songs probably rests on 2 Sam. xxiii, 1 'the sweet psalmist of Israel'; this is a possible translation of the Hebrew, and has been retained in the Revised Version; but the natural rendering is 'the darling of Israel's songs'; that is, the one who is celebrated in the songs of Israel—a national hero, not a national poet.

In the Psalter we have represented the devotional side of Hebrew religion, the laying bare of the soul to God: piety and a sure confidence in God, as well as a thirst for Him which nothing else can satisfy. Alongside this high level of religious aspiration there is, however, a darker side,

[1] It is doubtful whether 'A Psalm of David' really means a Psalm by David, or about David, or from a collection named after David: this is especially true of the Psalms of Asaph or the Sons of Korah.

and the conscience of Christian people has at length been aroused to the danger of repeating in public worship sentiments of hatred and derision which are certainly unworthy of the Gospel. But such passages are comparatively few, and the Psalter as a whole is unrivalled as a book of devotion. It seems to belong to no age and no country, and has therefore at all times and in every place been made the vehicle by which pious souls have expressed their own longings after GOD and their joy in His presence.

The personal element in the Psalms is very evident, but it is possible that in some cases the community itself, rather than the individual worshipper, is supposed to be the subject or the speaker. It seems probable, too, that the Psalms have been adapted and revised in order to meet the growing needs of the people, or to correct what were held to be mistaken views of the earlier writer (e.g. the last two verses of Ps. li, though in full accordance with later Jewish belief, are at variance with the burden of the Psalm as a whole, which sees no need for sacrifice of any kind).

Leaving on one side the important subject of the Future for treatment in the next chapter, we now come to deal with the actual problems which faced the Hebrew thinkers. These were mainly concerned with the very practical question of rewards and punishments, but they led ultimately to that grave problem, the solution of which still avoids us, the fact of pain and evil in the universe.

The writers of the Old Testament, since they had no

belief in a life for the individual after death (a life, that is, that was worth having), placed the entire drama of man's deeds and their reward and punishment within the limits of his life on earth. Prosperity was the reward of piety, and adversity the portion of wickedness. This was a simple and naïve belief, but quite obviously one which it was difficult to hold in the face of actual experience. Outside the Old Testament this doctrine of retribution had been worked out even in details, and the principle laid down by the writer of the Wisdom of Solomon, 'By what things a man transgresseth, by the same also he is punished' (xi, 16), received many illustrations. One striking example from the Book of Jubilees may be given. In iv, 31 it records the tradition that Cain was killed by the fall of his house, the stones of which slew him, since by a stone he had slain his brother.

To a people who held such material views of religion the tragedy of the Exile was a staggering blow. It is quite certain that the best elements of the nation, not only from a military, but also from a moral point of view, were removed from Jerusalem on its first capture (Jer. xxiv; Ezek. xii, xx, 37 ff.). Those who were left behind might flatter themselves on the superior merit which had allowed them to remain in Jehovah's own land, but the really pious knew better—and the problem was an acute one even then. It became still more acute as the teaching of Jeremiah and of Ezekiel, that the innocent were not to suffer for the sins of the guilty, the children for the fathers (Jer. xxxi, 30;

Ezek. xviii), began to spread among them. This had seemed so easy a way out. Just as the Hindoo can put down the undeserved misfortunes which a man may encounter to some crime committed in a previous existence, so the Hebrew, with his strong sense of the continuance of the family life through each separate generation, could account for the same phenomenon on the supposition that some sin of the father was now being worked out in punishment on the son. Contemporary methods of revenge no doubt gave force to this solution.

But not only did righteous men suffer, there were also many sinners who 'flourished like a green bay tree'. How were they to be fitted into a religious system which still clung to material wealth as the test of a right relation to God? This problem troubled several of the Psalmists. In Ps. xxxvii the writer may affirm that in the experience of a long lifetime he had never 'seen the righteous forsaken' in the end, and that the wicked sooner or later had been cut down, but other men must have realized that they had not been so fortunate. In Ps. lxxiii the writer, in his distress, goes into the sanctuary of God, and there finds a similar solution to the problem: the wicked are exalted only to be brought down with more utter destruction. This might console the pious in individual cases but the problem itself still remained.

Let us turn again to the other side of the problem, the misfortunes of the righteous. The writer or writers of the book of Job set themselves to solve this problem. Here

was the case of a man abundantly righteous, and yet misfortunes came upon him. Why was it? Some said at once (and no doubt many individuals had had the same judgement passed on them in real life) that he was a hypocrite, one who used piety as a screen behind which to commit dreadful crimes. The writer of the prologue (i and ii) and epilogue (xlii, 7–17) holds the orthodox view, that these misfortunes were but to test him, and that in the end he would have all restored to him. The finest thing in the drama is, however, the attitude of Job himself: he will trust GOD even though He slay him (xiii, 15), and is confident that his Vindicator will arise, though he himself may by that time be no more (xix, 25). This was the attitude of Jeremiah when he ventured to plead with the Almighty concerning his own sufferings (Jer. xii, 1), and it is the only attitude of the devout servant of GOD in any age. It is better to be with GOD in torment, than in rapture without Him: 'In His will is our peace'.[1]

All these attempts at solution, it will be noted, restrict the problem, as well as the solution, to the term of man's life, unless indeed Job xix, 26 f. refer to a resurrection of the body.[2] It was not long, however, before men's minds began to move out beyond such narrow limits in an attempt to find a solution by comprehending a wider sphere: in the next chapter we shall see how the doctrine of a future

[1] Dante, *Paradiso* III, 85.

[2] This is most unlikely in view of xiv, 7 ff.

life was brought in to rectify the injustices of the present existence.

The problem of sin, of offences against GOD, how was that dealt with? To the earlier prophets all that was required was the turning back to GOD in penitence and sorrow (e.g. Hos. xiv, 1 ff.); as we have seen, they felt no need of the sacrificial system (see p. 62 above).[1] But even those who advocated the sacrificial system saw in it a divine gift, rather than a human device for obtaining forgiveness (Lev. xvii, 11). If we take the limitations of Lev. iv, 2 strictly, sacrifices are an atonement only for those who 'sin unwittingly'; the deliberate sinner had no remedy even in the sacrificial system (Num. xv, 30). It seems hardly possible that such limitations were actually made in Israel, and we may safely suppose that for those who lived within a convenient distance of a sanctuary, or at any rate of Jerusalem, sacrifice was a normal means of atonement for every sin.

But what of those who lived in 'unclean' lands amongst the Dispersion, where sacrifice could not be offered? Among them, and indeed among other Jews, there seems to have been a tendency to substitute 'good works' for sacrifice. Nebuchadrezzar is advised 'to break off' sins by righteousness (Dan. iv, 27), whilst the writer of Ecclesiasticus sees in almsgiving a means of atonement (iii,

[1] This, it should be noted, is also the teaching of the Parable of the Prodigal Son: the father is waiting to forgive, but the son must come to himself and return (Lk. xv, 11 ff.).

30)[1] and the Psalms of Solomon commend fasting (iii, 9). There was still another idea, which gradually became prominent in later Judaism, the idea of mediation. The earliest instances of it are limited to appeals made to GOD: e.g. Moses on behalf of his people (Ex. xxxii, 11 ff.), and Job for his friends (xlii, 8 f.). Even those who were not still on this earth seem to have been supposed to have this power in later times (e.g. Jeremiah (2 Macc. xv, 14)), whilst angels are frequently appealed to for their prayers (Job v, 1, xxxiii, 24; Tobit xii, 12; Enoch ix, 3, xcix, 3).[2] The whole idea receives its highest developement in the figure of the Suffering Servant who is wounded for the sins of others and gives his soul as an offering for sin (Is. liii, 4 ff.).

Before leaving the question of offences and their consequences, we must now consider the subject of offences committed not against GOD, but by a man against his neighbour. The law said 'an eye for an eye' (Ex. xii, 23 ff.), but even in the Old Testament there were those who felt that this was not the highest mode of dealing with offenders (Prov. xxv, 21 f., xxiv, 29) especially with a brother Jew (Lev. xix, 17 f.).[3] In the later writings there is a gradually

[1] The Talmud taught that almsgiving was more than all sacrifices (*Sukkah*, 59 *b*).

[2] On this subject see further 'The Intercession of Saints in Jewish Literature', by the present writer in *Jeremiah* (West. Com.), pp. 129 f.

[3] This spirit is, of course, exceptional; the prevailing tone is that of the Psalmist (Ps. xli, 10, cxxxvii, 8 f.):—perhaps the most horrible example is 1 Kings ii, 6, 8 f.).

growing appreciation of the attitude becoming to the children of a merciful GOD. In Ecclus. xxviii, 2, those who forgive their neighbour are promised forgiveness when they themselves pray (cf. Mk. xi, 25). But the highest point is reached in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, where forgiveness is to be extended not only to an adversary who confesses his offence but to one who remains obstinate: 'if he be shameless and persist in his wrongdoing, even so forgive him from the heart, and leave to God the avenging' (*Test. Gad* VI).[1]

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[1] The above paragraph is based on Charles, *Between the Old and New Testaments*, pp. 133–158.

CHAPTER NINE

THE FUTURE (ESCHATOLOGY)

SPECULATIONS as to the origin of the world in which he lives, and as to its end (eschatology), have always attracted man, when once the stage of savagery has been passed. At one time it was thought that such speculations in Hebrew literature were a sign of late date, but this is no longer held by most scholars, and it is at least possible that many of the most characteristic ideas of the Hebrews were originally taken over by their forefathers from the Sumerians.

Visions of the last days are especially common when all things seem to be going wrong, and Utopias are usually the dreams of men who despair of their own age. Sometimes, indeed, it is to the past, rather than to the future, that the thoughts are turned in the search for happier days; but this is more characteristic of the Greek than of the Jew.[1]

In their visions of the future the prophets made a lavish use of all kinds of imagery. Often enough it is difficult, if not impossible, to know what is meant to be symbolical

[1] 'The golden age of the Gentile was in the past: his poets told him of it, and how it was gone. The Jew's golden age was in the future: his prophets told him to look forward to its coming.' Armitage Robinson, *Ephesians*, p. 57.

and what literal fact. The amazing language of Joel ii, 10, for example, with its description of a quaking earth and a shuddering heaven, is it to be taken merely as a poetical device or as foretelling the actual signs of the times? Outside the Old Testament itself there is a large body of literature which is deeply interested in eschatology. Much of this literature is what is known as Pseudepigraphal: that is, the author has concealed his own name, and in order to give added weight to his message and to secure it a wider public, has sent forth his book under the name of some well known figure. Examples of this method are found in the Old Testament itself in the Proverbs of Solomon and the book of Daniel, but beyond it we get the various books of Enoch, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (i.e. the twelve sons of Jacob), and so forth. In these books there is an even more imaginative use of imagery. Often their use of symbols is, as Abrahams says:

> ...weird and grotesque enough. You try in vain to visualize them—a woman booted in sun and moon and crowned with twelve stars—or four-faced, four-winged, calf-footed, man-handed creatures of the chariot—or giants with flaming faces and burning eyes, with lips belching flame, clothed in purple, golden-pinioned, snow-fingered—or Eve, standing up to her neck in water surrounded by every manner of swimming thing and all the other properties of a pantomime nightmare. So, too, with Enoch's ice-fire edifices, and mystic trees, and the incongruous and unrealizable monsters generally which crowd the Apocalyptic canvas. (*Judaism*, pp. 37 f.)

On the other hand, the visions of the felicity of the future, with the flowering desert and the rivers on the hill

tops (Is. xli, 18 f., etc.), are surely the language of symbolism. This is a question which needs to be faced, since it becomes acute in the eschatological passages in the New Testament, which are obviously borrowed from the Old. Another difficulty arises from the close connexion between religious and political dreams. Jehovah, since His fate is closely linked up with that of His people, must avenge them; and so religion and politics are really inseparable. It must be remembered that the prophets in their visions thought little, if anything, of the individual, but everything of the race. If their visions are approached from this point of view the difficulty is lessened: they are not concerned with the salvation of the souls of men, but with the survival of a nation. That is why the doctrine of the Resurrection hardly emerges in the Old Testament itself.

The predominant teaching of the Old Testament is that death is the end of all real life for mankind. A shadowy existence in the hidden depths of Sheol (= the grave, or Hades) might be possible; but since those in Sheol were cut off from God's care and love, they could no longer even worship Him (see among other passages: Is. xxxviii, 18 f.; Job vii, 9; Ps. vi, 5, xxx, 9, lxxxviii, 5, 11 f., cxv, 17). Man is thus in much the same position as the beasts which perish (Eccles. iii, 19, ix, 4 f.).

If this was the predominant belief of the Old Testament, how, it may be asked, did the idea of a resurrection arise, and ultimately triumph? It was in part the result of man's

failure to solve the problem of the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous (see above, pp. 99 ff.). So long as a life here below was the complete existence of man, the problem appeared to be insoluble: but the more men thought over their experience, the deeper became their conviction that there must be a life beyond this in which all its injustices would find redress. But it was not along this line only that men's thoughts moved towards this conclusion. The developement of the idea of the Messianic Kingdom led them in the same direction.

In the earlier prophets the idea of national revival or resurrection is frequently found (e.g. Hos. vi, 1 f.; Ezek. xxxvii, 12), and after a time the growing importance of individuals as members of the revived community led to the idea of their rising to take their share in it; this resurrection was, of course, limited to the just (Is. xxvi, 19; Dan. xii, 1 f.). In this form the doctrine rapidly spread, and even as late as the first century B.C. some held that sinners would not rise (cf. Ps. Sol. xiii, 13, 'the destruction of the sinner shall be for ever'). But the influence of the other line of developement was making itself felt and, alongside the resurrection to share in the bliss of the Kingdom, there was set the resurrection to judgement. Although this doctrine was developed so late in the history of Judaism, it speedily made its way, except among the Sadducees; and not long before the birth of our Lord it seems to have been taken as a matter of course (Wisdom i, 13 ff., ii, 22 f.: cf. John xi, 24). The highest grounds upon which im-

mortality can be attributed to man were, however, but vaguely surmised, and it was not until our Lord Himself illuminated the subject, that it was seen that those who have been worthy of the friendship of GOD will not be deprived of that joy by the dissolution of their bodies (Lk. xx, 37 f.).

We come now to the vast and complex subject of the future, not of the individual, but of the nation, and indeed of all nations. This has its centre in the conception of what is sometimes called the Messianic Kingdom. But as this idea of the Kingdom did not, as we shall see below, always include a Messiah, it is perhaps better to call it, by anticipation, the Kingdom of GOD, the name by which it is known in the New Testament. This idea, like much else in Hebrew religion, had very humble beginnings. In its earliest form it appeared as the Day of the Lord; the day, that is, when Jehovah will vindicate Himself against His enemies and bring triumph to his people (Zeph. i, 12–ii). At that time men had not yet risen above the idea of Jehovah as the GOD of Israel only, and so their ideas of the Kingdom were narrow and incomplete: but the conception was a splendid one and a manifestation of the intense faith of Israel.

This aspect of the subject has been well put by Hogg in his small book, *Christ's Message of the Kingdom*: 'The idea of the coming "Kingdom of God" was, on its human side, a great venture of faith. It was a glowing vision by means of which Hebrew faith learned to continue trusting God in

spite of appearances—to continue believing Him to be Light in spite of all shadows of darkness' (p. 11).

In its most highly developed form the doctrine of the Kingdom included not a few contradictory ideas. These we must now consider. For the sake of clearness (so far as it can be attained on the subject) we will divide the evidence under five headings: (*a*) the coming of the Kingdom, (*b*) its scene, (*c*) its members, (*d*) its Ruler, (*e*) its duration.

(*a*) *The coming of the Kingdom.*

The most important point to be noted is that all parties were agreed that the Kingdom would be inaugurated by God Himself; it was to be His gift, and no device of man could bring it to pass. The prevalent idea was that it would come suddenly, as on the clouds of heaven (Dan. vii, 13 f.; cf. Enoch lxxxiii–xc), though the possibility that it would come gradually is also found occasionally (Jub. xxiii, 26–28), an idea which was taken up vigorously by some Jewish teachers after the fall of the Temple in 70 A.D. As in later ages, men were keenly anxious to know when the Kingdom was to come, and various attempts were made to forecast the time. In Jer. xxiii, 5 f., xxiv, 5 f., the date seems to be seventy years after the fall of Jerusalem. Again, Haggai and Zechariah promised the Kingdom on the rebuilding of the Temple. Later again, the writer of Daniel, taking the seventy years of Jeremiah as weeks of years (i.e. 490 years), dated the coming Kingdom within three and a half years

of the time of his writing. Since that day, with equal ingenuity and equal lack of success, the unduly curious have striven to pry into the secret counsels of the Almighty (cf. Mk. xiii, 32).

(*b*) *The scene of the Kingdom.*

In the earliest stages of the idea the Kingdom was to be in Israel's own land—no other place could have entered into the mind of a patriotic and pious Jew. But later the idea became extended and the present earth seems to be the site, and later again the present earth and heaven after a process of transformation (Is. lxv, 17, lxvi, 22). Then in the second century B.C. men began to despair of any amendment of the present state of things and conceived the idea of an entirely new earth and heaven; a spiritual state into which flesh and blood could not enter.

(*c*) *The members of the Kingdom.*

To the primitive Israelites, who believed in Jehovah as a local deity only, the members of the Kingdom were naturally enough to be Israelites. But with the acceptance of the idea of Jehovah as the GOD of the whole universe the question was raised to a higher plane. Two distinct views then began to prevail. One party, which traced itself back to Ezekiel, held that the new idea of Jehovah made no difference: Israel was still His peculiar people, and the nations were to have no share in the Kingdom. This may be termed the prevailing view of post-exilic Judaism. The

other party went back to Jeremiah. They held the contrary opinion that since Jehovah was GOD of all men, all nations should find a place within His Kingdom (Jer. iii, 17 f.; Is. xix, 16 ff.). There is in Jeremiah also, it would seem, a different and more mystical idea, by which Israelites, and ultimately men of all nations, may enter into the Kingdom, by God Himself dwelling in their hearts (xxxi, 31: cf. Is. lvii, 15).

A few words on the fate of the Gentiles may be inserted here. In the earliest days they were naturally not considered at all. Then came the idea that they would be turned to Jehovah (Ps. lxxii, 11, 17), but, even so, with no hope of having more than a degraded position in the Kingdom; they were to be slaves, the *helots* of Israel (Is. xii, 2), or, if they refused this office, destruction was to be their portion (Is. lx, 12).[1] In later times there was a sharp difference of opinion on the subject. Some, with a universal outlook, like the writer or writers of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, expected a time when all the Gentiles would be gathered to Jehovah (*Test. Simeon* vii, 2; *Test. Benj.* ix, 2), a point of view shared by the writer of Enoch xc, 30. In a strange book attributed to Baruch a distinction is made between those who have never known Israel—these are to be saved—and those who knew them or ruled over them—for such there will be no mercy (2 Bar. lxxii, 4–6). Later

[1] In these passages it is not always clear whether the reference is to the future Messianic Kingdom or to the people in a more normal state.

on feeling became gradually harder and narrower, and annihilation became the appointed lot of all Gentiles (Enoch xxxvii–lxx; 4 Esdras xiii, 37 ff.), one of the chief tasks of the Messiah being to slay them with his own hand (4 Esdras xii, 33).

(*d*) *The Ruler of the Kingdom.*

In the earlier prophets there is no mention of any Messiah; Jehovah Himself is to rule over His Kingdom: so in Amos, Zeph., Nahum, Hab., Joel, Daniel, and some late passages in Isaiah (xxiv–xxvii, liv, 11 ff., lx–lxii, lxv–lxvi). In some of the books outside the Old Testament also the Messiah is disregarded; e.g. 1 and 2 Maccabees, Judith, and Tobit. In view of this Dr Charles concludes that 'the Messiah was no essential part of the kingdom' (*op. cit.* p. 76). In the writings which contain a promise or recognition of a Messiah, there is an exceedingly interesting variety of opinion as to his identity. The earliest idea is that of the revival of the Davidic kingdom with David himself as king (Ezek. xxxiv, 21 ff., xxxvii, 21 ff.). But in the period of the Exile Cyrus, a heathen king, is hailed as Messiah (Is. xlv, 1); a little later again Zerubbabel is to be Messiah (see above, pp. 68 f.). Then came a wave of disillusionment, and the whole idea of a Messiah is given up. On the revival of Jewish life under the Maccabees, however, the project again came into favour; but with one striking difference, the Messiah was no longer to be a member of the tribe of Judah, but of that of Levi. There

can be but little doubt that it was from the Levite family of the Maccabees that he was to come, and possibly men hoped that the office might be successfully undertaken by Simon Maccabaeus himself, that Simon in whose honour Ps. cx was written. But again disillusionment followed with the decline of the Maccabean house. Then a new idea appears in Enoch xxxvii–lxxi—that of the Son of Man, a mysterious creation different from, though perhaps suggested by, the 'son of man' of Dan. vii, 13, who is merely a typical human being. Last of all, the Davidic Messiah was revived in the Psalms of Solomon, a work produced under Pharisaic influences.

(*e*) *The duration of the Kingdom.*

The Kingdom from the earliest ideas of it was to be for evermore (Ezek. xxxvii, 28; Dan. vii, 27); nothing less would have satisfied the longings of those who looked for its appearing. But this did not mean that those who shared in it were to live for ever: their lives were indeed to be of patriarchal length (Is. lxv, 20) but death would at last overtake them. In later days, when the Kingdom was thought of as a heavenly one only, there was brought in the conception of a preliminary Messianic kingdom upon this earth of temporary duration. According to some, this was to last four hundred years (4 Edras vii, 28 f.), but according to others, a full thousand (Enoch i–xxxvi). This latter period is the same as that mentioned in Rev. xx, 2 ff., which no doubt follows the older tradition, and so is

the origin of what is known as the Millennium. The most fully developed idea of the Kingdom itself is that it is to be eternal in the heavens (Sibylline Oracles iii, 50; Secrets of Enoch xlii, 3; 1 Thes. iv, 17).

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CHAPTER TEN

THE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST

JUDAISM received its crown and fulfilment in Jesus, the Messiah or Christ. This statement, although accepted in theory has not, until quite recent years, been allowed sufficient weight. Even so great a scholar as Schürer, whose work, *The History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus*, is now a classic, seems hardly to allow sufficient credit to Judaism for the part which it played in the genesis of Christianity. If we take the Old and New Testaments as they stand, there undoubtedly appears to be an enormous gulf between them, and the debt of the New to the Old seems to be less than actually it is. But when the mass of literature, to which reference has already frequently been made, which belongs to the two centuries before Christ is brought into consideration, the gulf is filled, and in its place there is seen a gradual developement.

When we think of the obscure, and even doubtful, origins of Judaism, we feel perhaps at first a shrinking from thus so closely associating the Gospel with it. But this feeling is unworthy; for the miracle of Judaism lies in the very fact that, from such humble beginnings, it reached such majestic heights of spiritual attainment. That the

'deepest creed the world has ever known' should have sprung 'out of the feeble movements of a petty clan of highlanders', as Canon Nairne once put it,[1] should not surprise us, since it has always been the divine method to work through instruments which the world in its blindness has seen fit to despise.

The apostle of the Gentiles told the Galatians that the Christ was born 'in the fulness of the time' (Gal. iv, 4). This statement is not likely to be challenged by anyone who has even a superficial acquaintance with the conditions of the world into which our Lord came. Space will not allow more than a brief mention of some of the most important factors in the position. Speaking in general terms, it may be said that three different lines of preparation had at that moment reached their highest point of perfection when taken as a whole. These were the three influences which arose respectively from Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome.

Rome was the mistress of the world at this epoch. Beneath her firm hand wars and quarrels had for the time come to an end, the *Pax Romana* was everywhere observed. This was a great advantage to the future missionaries of the gospel, especially when it is remembered that with the *Pax Romana* there went a breaking down of the boundaries which separate nation from nation. These same missionaries were also to find in the Roman roads a

[1] *The Faith of the Old Testament*, p. 11.

ready means of travelling from one part of the empire to another (a study of the journeys of St Paul reveals this very strikingly). Rome's preparation was thus material rather than spiritual, but it is possible that the conception of a single world empire helped to make men feel the need for a single religion (the deification of the emperor is perhaps a symptom of this), whilst the organization of the empire gave to the Church a model upon which to work.

The task of the Greeks was more spiritual. They had to work out a universal language which should be the means of conveying the Gospel to every part of the empire of their conquerors. In the days of Athens' greatest glory the barriers of local and national feeling would have made Greek only a poor medium: but Alexander, with his dream of a world culture, and then the Romans, had swept away such barriers and allowed Greek a free course. Already the Jews of Alexandria had translated the Old Testament into Greek, and the famous Jewish philosopher and mystic, Philo, was at the date of our Lord's birth striving to reconcile Greek and Hebrew ideals. The work which the Jews of the Dispersion, all unconsciously, were doing to prepare the way for the spread of the Gospel among the Gentiles was to prove very valuable.

We turn now to Judaism. In considering the part which it played in preparing for the coming of our Lord we must take into account both the weaknesses which made its

adherents turn to the newer faith, and also the virtues which made its successor so strong. Our enquiry will conclude with an attempt to assess the extent to which Jesus Himself was indebted in His teaching to the prophets and wise men who went before Him.

In his sketch of 'the Darker Side of Contemporary Judaism'[1] Sanday puts in the forefront a too exclusive emphasis on the transcendence of GOD. 'It had no adequate means of spanning the gulf between GOD and man. The faults of Judaism were those of Deism.' This is a just criticism, and Jehovah, for the multitude of Jews, was hidden away behind a whole host of ceremonial and legal observances.[2] The Law was indeed 'a tutor to bring men to Christ' (Gal. iii, 24), but the tutor, forgetful of the limitations of his office, had become a tyrant. To keep the Law had become almost an end in itself. Hence there came a growing temptation to substitute legal and even ceremonial righteousness for a genuine love of justice and all other virtues. Moreover the insistence on the strict observance of the Law in all its details, made men forget that obedience might arise from very different kinds of motive: in Judaism the whole question of motive seemed to have passed out of sight. The Law itself was so sacred that it must have a 'hedge' of human traditions around it, tradi-

[1] *Outlines of the Life of Christ*, p. 13. (Reprinted from H.D.B.)

[2] This also led to a materialistic outlook on revelation: 'Jews desire signs', as St Paul put it (1 Cor. i, 22).

tions which might add to its outward splendour, but which often defeated its true end (cf. Mk. vii, 11 f.). The average Jew must have found the petty rules which beset his daily path a perpetual burden: though to one who had time to make 'religion' the chief business of life they were only too welcome; the Pharisee praying at the street corner is the typical product of this class. But the scorn of the Pharisee for the Publican was no recommendation of the religion in which he delighted (cf. Mt. vii, 1 ff.; Lk. xviii, 9 ff.).

The observance of the Law thus ministered to the spiritual pride of the individual: it also ministered to that pride of race which was one of the greatest stumbling blocks in the way of Judaism if it desired to fulfil its mission to the world. The rite of circumcision and the strict observance of the Sabbath were at once the badge of the faithful Jew and the mark of his separation. So deeply implanted in the mind and conscience of the Jew were these practices, that even the power of the Gospel could not, in many cases, rid him of them. The troubles which came upon St Paul from the Judaizers (i.e. those who insisted that Gentile Christians should first become Jews by circumcision) are notorious: and not seldom our Lord Himself was condemned for offending against their feelings for the Sabbath. Knowing the history of the Jewish people and the splendid heroism with which they clung to their Law in face of persecution and temptation to apostasy, we

must not be too eager to condemn them. With them, as with many others, the consciousness of great privileges, and privileges which they had preserved in the face of grave dangers, led to a reliance upon them which was fatal to all religious and moral progress. They were the children of Abraham and that was all sufficient (cf. Lk. iii, 8; Jo. viii, 33, 39).

From the consideration of these weaknesses we pass on to that other side which gave to Judaism its real power. The very weaknesses of the Law were, as Gwatkin has pointed out, 'a pledge of hope', for 'the conception of God as perfect goodness turned every imperfection into a promise and a prophecy of better things to come'.[1] It was in the Jewish conception of God, as holy, righteous, and careful for His people that Jesus was to find a foundation upon which to build the higher idea of Him as the all-loving Father. Judaism once and for all had arrived at the conclusion, though only after much wandering from the right way, that God was One. The importance of this conclusion can hardly be exaggerated. In polytheism, as for example among the Greeks and Romans, the gods worked against one another, and the general impression left upon the mind is one of a confusion which sooner or later breeds contempt. The Hebrew conception did away with the confusion, and so avoided the occasion for contempt. At times it is true that human feelings, not of the highest kind, are

[1] *The Knowledge of God*, II, 46.

attributed to Jehovah, but there is nothing parallel to the puerilities and profanities of the *Iliad* or *Aeneid*; Jehovah still remains a God worthy of man's adoration. To hand on to Christianity the lesson of adoration, even though not fully worked out, was surely a great achievement. It has been said of one of the greatest religious teachers of recent years (Von Hügel) that the essence of religion for him lay in adoration coupled with heroic virtue. That the Jew was capable of heroic virtue would be denied by none: this then must be added to the rich heritage which the Church received from the Synagogue.

But in teaching that God was One, and that He was perfect goodness, the Jews raised serious problems which, as we have seen, they did not succeed in solving. Their failures or, it would be more true to say, their unsuccessful attempts, were of service to Christianity in so far as they pointed out where the problems lay, an exceedingly important matter. In the endeavour to reconcile the following of Jehovah with earthly misfortune, the Jews were led on to the question of the Future Life, both as it concerned the nation and the individual. This in the New Testament is carried forward a stage further in the teaching on the Kingdom of God. Furthermore, in following out these eschatological ideas Judaism was led back once more into a relation with the world at large, and to some extent raised above its proud isolation: visions of the end of the age must take some account of other peoples beside the

Jewish nation. It is perhaps because of this that the three centuries before the Christian era saw a revival of interest in the Gentiles and a desire to spread Judaism among them.[1]

When Gibbon summed up the reasons for the rapid spread of the Christian Church he included among them the zeal of the early disciples and the fact that they possessed, in contradiction to the pagans, a professional priesthood and organization. The idea of both of these came from their Jewish forefathers. In fact the first attempts at organization were simply developements from the synagogue. Furthermore, the temple itself and the whole system of sacrificial worship brought before the Christians ideas of sin and of atonement with which they had to reckon.

Our Lord claimed that it was the function of the faithful householder to bring out of his stores things both new and old (Mt. xiii, 52). His own teaching was an example of this method. Through the study of Jewish literature outside the Old Testament we have come to realize that the amount of the 'old' was very much greater than at one time had been supposed: in fact it would be true to say that practically all the teaching of Jesus finds earlier parallels in Jewish literature. This fact must not however be allowed to lead us too far (cf. Renan's paradoxical statement that Philo was the elder brother of Jesus), since it is one thing to find a

[1] See an article by Box in *Church Quarterly Review*, Oct. 1922.

number of isolated parallels, and quite another to compare the teaching as a whole. The older literature was full of childish and unworthy ideas, it was confused and contradictory (cf. Chapter IX above). From His predecessors Jesus took all that was most worthy and, rejecting by His supreme spiritual insight all that was less valuable, He made of its diverse elements something that was really new. In one sense Christianity was a developed Judaism (Mt. v, 17); in another it was something so revolutionary that the old religion was to be rent asunder in its efforts to contain it (Mt. ix, 17).

Of the different strands which went to make up the threefold cord of Jewish religion, the prophetic, the priestly, and the apocalyptic, Jesus seems to have made but little use of the second: this was left to St Paul and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews to work out. The apocalyptic strand, however, was taken up and developed by Him. He found in its symbolism a ready means of putting forth His own eschatological teaching, teaching which impressed itself deeply upon the primitive Christians. But it was with the first of these aspects of Judaism that he most fully sympathized. He was above all a reviver of the old prophetic religion. This has been well put by Box:

> It must not be forgotten that our Lord's attitude towards the old religion of Israel was that of the prophet rather than the priest. The fulfilment of the Law of which He spoke was essentially prophetic in character. He breathed into it fresh life, deepened and extended its moral significance and claim. And

above all, He took up a position towards it of sovereign freedom. It is in the prophetic Scriptures that He finds the most adequate expression of His own Messianic consciousness, especially in Isaiah liii. The people instinctively recognized in the new teacher the voice of a prophet. And in fact the whole character of the Christian movement depicted in the New Testament is prophetic. The Day of Pentecost marked the outpouring of the prophetic spirit and gifts. 'The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.'[1]

From the beginning of their history the Jews had always been looking forward to the coming of a prophet (cf. Deut. xviii, 18). In the centuries before the advent of Christ the people were all too conscious that they no longer had the guidance of such messengers (1 Macc. ix, 27), though not without the hope that soon a prophet would come to solve their problems (1 Macc. iv, 46), and to bring forth salvation (*Test. Benjamin* ix. 2). The great prophecy of Mal. iv, 5 (Heb. iii, 23 f.) that Elijah was to come as the herald of the Day of the Lord must constantly have been in their minds (cf. Ecclesiasticus xlviii, 12). In our Lord's own day this expectation was especially vivid (cf. Lk. ii, 38), hence when the rumour went round concerning John the Baptizer we can understand the feelings which led the multitudes to flock to hear him.

[1] *Expositor*, July 1919, pp. 10 f.

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